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The Relationship Between Participation in Athletics and Academic Performance of Male African American High School Students

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PARTICIPATION IN ATHLETICS AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF MALE AFRICAN AMERICAN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

by

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my Mother, Ms. Hilda Louise Barnes. This work is our work. This degree is just as much your accomplishment as it is mine, because you are my inspiration and my strongest cheerleader. Your example of what it means to be a Mother and to love your family is what drives me to be the best that I can be in all aspects of my life. Mother, you taught me at a young age that "Less than our best is failure, and failure is not an option". I could never find the words to express how much your sacrifice and unconditional love mean to me, but I pray that I have made you as proud of me as I am proud to be your daughter.

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Abstract

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A dramatic gap in the academic achievement of African American males and the academic achievement of Caucasian males across this country continues to exist. African American males fail to complete high school at an increasingly high rate or are ill-prepared for postsecondary education upon completion of high school. The disengagement of African American males in schools has been associated with the continuance of this achievement gap. The influence on academic performance that participating in high school athletics had on African American male students who participated in an athletic program as compared to African American male students who did not engage in any type of athletics from 2008 to 2012, was investigated in this study. The foundational theories of this study are Bechtol's Sports Participation Theory and the Self-Determination Theory, which indicate that participating in athletics has a positive and lasting effect on academic outcomes for students.

The findings of this study provide educators and researchers further insight into some of the contributing factors of the achievement gap and a significant means of improving the secondary educational outcomes of African American males. This secondary analysis of existing data was conducted using categorical data, with the independent variables of participation or nonparticipation in athletics and socioeconomic status (SES) being measured against dependent variables of academic achievement. The results were measured by the cumulative grade point averages (GPA), the composite results of the American College Test (ACT) exam, and high school completion type of

the African American males who participated in athletics and those African American males who did not participate in athletics while in high school.

The findings of this research indicate that participation in high school athletic programs does have a significant influence on the academic performance of African American males. Results of this study further indicate that athletic participation proved to have a substantial impact on the completion of high school and the cumulative GPAs of African American male students and can significantly influence the academic success of African American males. This study also highlights that SES further impacts the academic achievement of African American males. The findings of this study show that athletic participation should be considered a viable means of engaging African American males and moving them toward high school completion and postsecondary readiness.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter 1

Introduction

The subject of the achievement gap between White and African American students has been the topic of much debate across the United States. The achievement gap relating to the different educational outcomes between African American males and Caucasian males has especially been a problem in this country for decades and continues to be a concern for educators and policy makers (Noguera, 2003). Since 2005, the graduation rate for African American males relative to Caucasian males has decreased only 3% (Schott Foundation, 2012). Nationally, 22% of eligible high school students do not graduate (Balfanz, Bridgeland, Bruce, & Fox, 2013). Only 57% of African American males complete high school, making their dropout rate about 21% higher than the total national dropout rate (Schott Foundation, 2012). The publication of these statistics has prompted a sense of urgency to increase the academic achievement and graduation rates among African American male students.

Agnew (2004) explained that academic performance in high school has an influence on whether or not a student graduates and has an opportunity for postsecondary education. Enrollment in the 9th grade is typically the largest of any grade level in a high school setting, due in part to the percentage of those students who do not earn credits during the freshman year and incoming students (Cohen & Smerdon, 2009). The at-risk 9th grade students are probably not going to meet high school graduation requirements (Jordan, McPartland, & Lara, 1996). Almost one-third of the nation's students drop out before completing high school graduation requirements (Bridgeland, Dulilio, & Morrison, 2006). Of the at-risk students who managed to complete graduation

requirements, 84% do not meet any of the college readiness benchmarks as indicated by the American College Test (ACT) (ACT, 2012). When college readiness is examined nationally by race/ethnicity, minority students are one and a half times less likely to meet the readiness levels than the total ACT-tested population, indicating that minority students are much less likely to be prepared for college. Specifically, African American students were the least probable to meet standards of college readiness in all core subjects nationwide (ACT, 2009).

Research supports some successful practices that generally strengthen the high school experience for at-risk students. The Education Longitudinal Study of 2002 (ELS, 2002) examined math achievement gains of disadvantaged and advantaged students who participated in some type of organized activity while in high school. The findings indicated that, throughout the K-12 educational process, involvement in an organized activity is a way to compensate for resources that aid in closing the achievement gap between children of different socioeconomic groups and is closely related to improved outcomes socially, behaviorally, and developmentally (Covay & Carbonaro, 2010).

African American male students who are not engaged in some type of organized activity during their high school career present an even higher risk for dropping out than do students of other races and backgrounds (Marsh, 1993). African American males regularly show poor academic achievement, are unemployed at a much higher rate, have poor health, limited options for medical care, shorter lifespans, and are sentenced to lengthier periods of incarceration than are males of other demographic groups (The Schott Foundation 50 State Black Boys Report, 2012).

Studies have scrutinized the social problems that factor into the plight of African American males (Carter, 2003; Fultz, 2006). Methodologies and resolutions to reduce adverse elements that effect the educational outcomes of African American males have been identified, as well (Riess, 1980; Sabo, Melnick, & Vanfossen, 1993). To adequately address the educational quandary of African Americans and implement substantial changes to policies that will significantly increase the outcomes for African American males in academic settings, a comprehensive range of the societal and emotional involvements of African American males must be emphasized (Dorime & Toldson, 2008).

Researchers have examined the theory that participating in a high school athletic program may have a positive influence on the academic achievement of African American males (Harris, 1994). Historically, athletic participation for many African American male teenagers has been seen as a prospect for financial success and a plan for providing support to family members in economically disadvantaged circumstances (Eitzen, 1999). Participation is high school athletics may possibly be one of various methods to positively impact the academic achievement of African American males and provide impetus, a work ethic, and self-assurance.

Studies have also been conducted to determine whether participation in athletic programs has a negative impact on the academic achievement of African American males. Hoberman (2000) noted that the aspiration of many African American males to achieve fame through sports has inclined them to refuse educational opportunities. According to Hoberman (2000), refusal is partially attributed to African American athletes more strongly identifying with sports to the discouragement of academics. In this

case, athletics is the center of the student's attention, causing a lack of focus on academics and making it a low priority (Hoberman, 2000).

Steele's (1997) stereotypical threat model suggested that views based on stereotypes might be linked to students' self-concept; therefore, students will identify with the apparent view of the person(s) posing the threat. Another element of the stereotype theory contends that students have a tendency to curtail areas in which others perceive that their associated group has had poor results, such as in educational settings. Inversely, students are more comfortable participating in activities in which the identified group has traditionally surpassed other groups, in this instance, athletics. Study results are inconclusive in some cases largely due to the lack of statistical research on high school athletics that is specific to African American males. Much of the research is frequently conducted along with an examination of the impact that general extracurricular and athletic activities have on academic success of students of all races and genders (Montgomery, 2010).

School districts and broader communities are recognizing the fact that African American males remain behind white and female students academically throughout the country (Rumberger, 2008) Consider, for example, the disproportionate number of African American and Hispanic students who are assigned to special classes for disabled students due to low performance on tests (Dowell, 2006). The overrepresentation of minorities in special education has been cited as one of the biggest indicators that all children are not experiencing the same opportunities in school (Harry & Klingner, 2006). According to Dowell (2006), teachers and school leaders should work to build capable learners who, with proper training and test-taking skills, are able to transfer knowledge

gained onto a testing answer sheet to demonstrate learning. Many African American males are not able to perform well on tests and appear on paper to have lower abilities than do Whites (Dowell, 2006).

This study proposed to examine whether or not participation in Tennessee Secondary School Athletic Association approved athletics significantly impacts the academic achievement of African American males in high school. While many factors contribute to the achievement gap between African American males and Caucasian males, this study addressed athletics as a possible way to curtail the negative factors that are deleterious for African American males in today's society.

Background of the Study

The gap between the academic achievement of African American males and Caucasian males is distinguishable from the beginning of the educational career in kindergarten and continues to widen afterward. In the 2008 National Assessment of Educational Progress (Salkind, 2008), a federally directed report on the academic performance of students measured in grades 4, 8, and 12, the reading achievement levels of African American boys in 8th grade were only slightly more advanced than the scores of Caucasian girls in 4th grade. In math, 46% of Black males scored "basic" or greater level achievement in comparison with 82% of White boys. The National Education Longitudinal Survey (Ingels, Scott, Lindmark, Frankel, & Myers, 1992) showed that 54% of 16-year-old African American males scored below the 20th percentile compared with 24% of White males and 42% of Hispanic males. The educational level of students' parents did not have an impact on gap closure: In 2006, 43% of African American seniors

in high school with at least one parent who completed college still did not exhibit fundamental reading skills, approximately double the proportion of White male students.

Statistics show that male African American students are 2.4 times as probable to have been removed from school due to suspension and twice as probable to have failed a grade as are White males, according to a College Board report (McLouglin & Noltemeyer, 2010). The high school completion rate also shows a wide gap with 42% of African American males graduating on schedule in 2006 while 71% of White males graduated on schedule. Following dropping out of school, African American males commonly appear to face further catastrophe. Amid 16- to 24-year-old African American males not participating in some type of educational program, more than half are unemployed; a third or more are incarcerated or on probation or parole. Of the African American males who have not completed high school, only 31% are employed (Dillon, 2009). African American males characterize the demographic group that is most likely to be unemployed (Dillon, 2009).

In searching for ways to close the achievement gap for African American males, scholars and proponents of high school athletics contend that participation in athletic programs while attending high school improves intrinsic motivation and increases academic performance as evidenced by improved grades (Rasmussen, 2000). Rasmussen's investigation concentrated predominantly on White males; however, it highlighted the idea that African American males who participated in athletic programs in high school displayed academic achievement as well. Sailes (1998) asserted that participation in athletics is a vital part of African American male socialization.

Superiority in athletics presents the greatest opportunity for demonstrating African American intelligence along with an opportunity for an improved life (Hoberman, 1997).

Previous studies have highlighted the positive impact of participating in athletics on several variables; nevertheless, investigations on athletic participation of African American males relative to academic achievement have delivered differing results. No statistical significance has been shown in most studies relative to the gaps in the academic performance of African American male athletes in high schools and those African American high school males who do not participate in athletics (Hartman, 2008). Much of the research on the participation in athletics has revealed that the experience of participating in sports programs in high school not only produces enhanced athletic performance but also significantly influences other variables relative to social development (Hirsh, 2009).

Statement of the Problem

In increasing numbers, high school African American males are not making academic progress at the rate of their peers. Additionally, African American males show a disturbingly high dropout rate from inner-city schools (Green & Winters, 2006). A significant dynamic that has been regularly linked to the achievement gap between African American males and Caucasian males is the disengagement from school of African American males (Carter, 2003). However, there is a paucity of research on the relationship between academic performance and African American males relating to experiences that impact the engagement of African American males in high school. Furthermore, there is even less research on the relationship pertaining to athletics. Thus, this study will examine the relationship between performance in academics and

participation/nonparticipation in athletics among African American male high school students.

Research Questions

1. To what extent is there a difference in academic performance as defined by cumulative GPA relative to the participation or nonparticipation of African American males in high school athletics?
2. To what extent is there a difference in academic performance as defined by cumulative GPA relative to the SES of African American males?
3. To what extent is there an interaction between the SES and participation or nonparticipation of African American males in high school athletics on academic performance as defined by cumulative GPA?
4. To what extent is there a difference in academic performance as defined by composite ACT score relative to the participation or nonparticipation of African American males in high school athletics?
5. To what extent is there a difference in academic performance as defined by composite ACT score relative to the SES of African American males?
6. To what extent is there an interaction between the SES and participation or nonparticipation of African American males in high school athletics on academic performance as defined by composite ACT score?
7. To what extent is there a difference in the high school completion rates of African American males relative to their participation or nonparticipation in high school athletics?

Hypotheses

High school athletic participation has a statistically significant impact across demographic characteristics such as SES and achievement variables, which include GPA, ACT, and high school completion**.**

H_{01}: There is no significant difference in academic performance as defined by cumulative GPA relative to the participation or nonparticipation of African American males in high school athletics.

H_1: There is a significant difference in academic performance as defined by cumulative GPA relative to the participation or nonparticipation of African American males in high school athletics.

H_{02}: There is no significant difference in academic performance as defined by cumulative GPA relative to the SES of African American males.

H_2: There is a significant difference in academic performance as defined by cumulative GPA relative to the SES of African American males.

H_{03}: There is no significant interaction between the SES and participation or nonparticipation of African American males in high school athletics on academic performance as defined by cumulative GPA.

H_3: There is a significant interaction between the SES and participation or nonparticipation of African American males in high school athletics on academic performance as defined by cumulative GPA.

H_{04}: There is no significant difference in academic performance as defined by composite ACT score relative to the participation or nonparticipation of African American males in high school athletics.

H_4: There is a significant difference in academic performance as defined by composite ACT score relative to the participation or nonparticipation of African American males in high school athletics.

H_{05}: There is no significant difference in academic performance as defined by composite ACT score relative to the SES of African American males.

H_5: There is a significant difference in academic performance as defined by composite ACT score relative to the SES of African American males.

H_{06}: There is no significant interaction between the SES and participation or nonparticipation of African American males in high school athletics on academic performance as defined by composite ACT score.

H_6: There is no significant interaction between the SES and participation or nonparticipation of African American males in high school athletics on academic performance as defined by composite ACT score.

H_{07}: There is no significant difference in the high school completion rates of African American males relative to their participation or nonparticipation in high school athletics.

H_7: There is no significant difference in the high school completion rates of African American males relative to their participation or nonparticipation in high school athletics.

Purpose of the Study

Prior investigations have implied that participation in high school athletics supports favorable educational effects for students (Bukowski, 2001). Contrarily, other researchers have argued that there is no connection between participation in athletics and improved academic performance for inner-city students (Fisher, Juszczak, & Friedman, 1996). For the purpose of this study, the researcher sought to determine whether or not

participation and nonparticipation in high school athletics has a direct effect on the academic achievement of African American males.

Significance of the Study

The results from this research may provide insight for educational administrators and researchers into the reasons African American males are not achieving at the same level as students of other races. In addition, the study may provide understanding of the relationship between various types of athletic participation. Also, the study may assist school districts in their efforts to increase achievement, graduation rate, and equity of access to postsecondary education of African American males.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following terms will be used as defined:

1. *Academic achievement*: Largely refers to a child's performance in academic areas such as reading or language arts, math, science, and history (Corneliben & Pfeifer, 2007). Student academic achievement is an ongoing building process of skills and knowledge developed through the curriculum and by teacher effectiveness (Darling-Hammond, 1997).
2. *American College Testing (ACT)*: Assessment of the overall educational progress of students in high school and their readiness to successfully engage in postsecondary education at the college level. The ACT is administered in a multiple-choice format and covers the areas of math, science, English, and reading (ACT, 2009).

3. *Achievement gap*: The remarked difference on a set of academic instruments between the academic performance of groups of students, typically identified by race, gender, ability, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status (Carter, 2003).
4. *Academic performance*: Defined differently in the literature (Jenson, 2009). In this study, *academic performance* is measured by ACT score, grade point average, and earning a high school diploma.
5. *Athletics*: Physical activities that are competitive in nature involving a team with a *Tennessee Secondary School Athletic Association* (TSSAA): approved, trained coach as the leader in a high school setting (Sherman, 2007).
6. TSSAA: The state governing body for high school athletics in Tennessee (Sherman, 2007).
7. *High school student*: Someone attending a school composed of students in grades 9-12 (Montgomery, 2010).
8. *Nonparticipation in athletics*: No engagement with any type of school-sponsored sports team that is sanctioned by the TSSAA (TSSAA, 2010).
9. *Participation in athletics*: During 4 years of high school enrollment, engagement in at least one school-sponsored sports team that is sanctioned by the TSSAA (TSSAA, 2010).
10. *Socioeconomic Status*: Determined by eligibility for free/reduced lunch in the K-12 school setting through the federally funded nutrition program that provides free or reduced-price meals to children on the basis of their family's income. Effective July 1, 2005, students who are in a family of four making less than

$25,155 are eligible for free meals; those making less than $35,798 qualify for reduced prices (Food & Nutrition Service, 2005, p. 1).

11. *Types of athletics:* Athletics sanctioned by TSSAA: cross-country track, football, golf, basketball, bowling, wrestling, baseball, soccer, tennis, and track (TSSAA.org, 2010).

Theoretical Framework

The foundational theories reflected in this study are Bechtol's Sports Participation Theory (2001), and the Self-Determination Theory (Vansteenkiste & Sheldon, 2006). Bechtol's Sports Participation Theory is centered on the idea that being involved in high school sports has a long-term, positive impact on athletes. This theory was developed following an investigation that observed the continuing influences of participating in high school sports as assessed by adults who previously participated in high school sports. Although the findings of the Bechtol study suggested that participating in high school sports has a long-standing, positive impact on students, the research did not associate its specific outcomes with a certain demographic of students. This theory is useful in this study to frame the research around determining whether or not participation in athletics has a lasting and positive effect on the academic achievement of African American male high school students.

The Self-Determination Theory maintains that a social setting may be able to prompt internal and external progressions that exist inside a person's mind and may alter that person's behavior (Vansteenkiste & Sheldon, 2006). This theory espouses that a person's behavior can be influenced through membership in a social group, such as an athletic team. Academic success is the behavior regulated by the athletic social group,

according to Harris (1994), through academic sports eligibility requirements. This means that student-athletes are motivated to earn good grades in order to maintain eligibility and that student-athletes also have better lifestyle management and self-identity (Marsh, 1993). This theory is useful in this study to frame the research around determining whether or not African American male students in high school are motivated to earn good grades in order to maintain athletic eligibility.

Assumptions of the Study

Assumptions that guided this study are that students who participate in some type of athletic activity in high school will perform better academically than those students who do not participate in any athletic activity and that the socioeconomic status (SES) of the student may make a difference in the significance of the impact. It also assumes that all of the participants who did not participate in a school-sponsored athletic activity did not participate in any type of organized sports team outside of the school setting.

Limitations of the Study

The following limitations apply to this study:

1. The researcher did not clearly determine whether or not those African American male students who are listed as not having participated high school athletics might participate in athletics outside of the high school setting.
2. The researcher did not identify all students who may have a disability or significant life event.
3. The researcher assumed that the school data used are accurate.

4. The researcher did not determine if the students participating in athletics were also enrolled in other academic programs outside of the school, such as tutoring programs.

Delimitations of the Study

The following delimitations apply to this study:

1. The researcher delimited the study to African American male high school students.
2. The researcher delimited the study to students in a mid-South urban school district.
3. The researcher delimited the study to the relationship of nonparticipation and participation in high school athletics and academic achievement when other factors may also influence academic achievement of students such as afterschool programs, parents, and other unobservable factors that do impact academic achievement.

Summary

Chapter 1 is meant to provide an introduction to the research studied by delivering results of previous investigations and the components of this research. Chapter 1 provides an introduction, background of the study, problem statement, research questions and hypotheses, purpose of the study, definitions of key terms, theoretical framework for the study, significance of the study, and limitations and delimitations of the study. Chapter 2 will provide a review of literature that examines the theories and historical foundation, as well as erstwhile research that relates to this study from multiple perspectives.

Chapter 3 explains the methodology of this study, including data collection and analytical procedures. Chapter 4 will deliver the results of the study, highlighting the research questions. Last, Chapter 5 will examine the findings and implications of the study for future research and practice.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter provides a review of literature that examines the theories and historical foundation, as well as erstwhile research that relates to this study from multiple perspectives. This literature review is written through the theoretical lens of Bechtol's Sports Participation Theory (Bechtol, 2001), and the Self-Determination Theory (Vansteenkiste & Sheldon, 2006). Key points considered in this review include (1) disparate educational practices, (2) inequitable outcomes for high school African American males, and (3) factors that may influence educational outcomes for African American males. Athletic participation or nonparticipation will be the focus of potential factors of influence in this study. The review of literature highlights the theoretical framework for the expansion of this study.

Disparate Educational Practices

For years, the academic achievement of African American males has lagged behind their peers of other races, particularly Caucasian males, as well as female peers of the same race (McNeir, 2015). This educational trend suggests disparities in the educational practices with regard to African American males. Some of the disparate educational practices reviewed in this study as contributing factors to the achievement gap are labeling, exclusionary consequences, lack of student engagement, student mobility, and stereotyping.

Labeling and overrepresentation in special education. The achievement gap between Caucasian and African American children has been the topic of much debate

across the United States. In this discussion, the disproportionate number of Hispanic and African American students placed in classes that are designed to serve disabled students is among the most delicate topics (Dowell, 2006). The overrepresentation of minorities in special education has been cited as one of the biggest indicators that all children are not experiencing the same opportunities in school (Harry & Klingner, 2006). Les Brown (1996) shared his experience of spending most of his school years in special education classes. In his book, *"Mr. Washington",* Brown described a time when he waited in the hall for a friend who was in "regular" classes. Mr. Washington, who was a math teacher at Brown's school, called Brown to execute a math problem on the chalkboard. Brown explained that he was mentally retarded and could not do a math problem.
Mr. Washington told Brown not to say that again and ultimately mentored him to show him that that was only someone else's opinion of him. Brown completed high school and went on to a successful career. Brown's experience as an African American male child labeled and categorized in special education is a prevalent experience for many children of color (Harry & Klingner, 2006).

Dr. Nancy Cappello, an education consultant for the Connecticut Department of Education, has stated that there should not be such a disproportionate number of disabled children represented by any one race (Dowell, 2006). Professionals who have examined the issue in Connecticut and other states across the United States have said that disability determinations are frequently incorrect in minority children, particularly males. Those students who are assigned to special education classes after being misdiagnosed encounter stigmas that are nearly impossible to overcome, according to Wiley, (1990).

The topic of overrepresentation of African American and Hispanic children in special education has been scrutinized closely in cities in Connecticut (Dowell, 2006). In 2005, Norwalk and Windham, two districts in Connecticut, were penalized by the state because their policies and processes for identifying and placing students in special classes were not acceptable (Dowell, 2006). These types of policies and processes are a national concern that is not limited to Connecticut, as evinced by the actions of the United States Congress. Congress voted to make monitoring disparities in special education one of the primacies in its reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act in 2004 (IDEIA, 2004).

Researchers believe that students in communities throughout the country are given labels, such as emotionally disturbed and learning disabled, that do not accurately describe them (Jensen, 2009). These children, mostly African American, are being identified as disabled and assigned to special education because the professionals in education are misconstruing behavioral problems and misinterpreting cultural variances (Harry & Klingner, 2006).

Lack of engagement. The problem of students not completing high school or dropping out has previously been explained as a gradual progression of disengagement from school (Bridgeland et al., 2006). Generally, students who drop out are not wholly engaged in school, have reduced participation, have little sense of belonging, and do not achieve successful outcomes; these issues result in students dropping out of school (Stout & Christenson, 2009). One of the greatest difficulties that teachers and school administrators are faced with in education is understanding and addressing the essential needs of disengaged students (Willms, 2003).

Maslow's hierarchy of needs suggests that students need to have their basic human needs met in order to reach their true potential. According to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory (Maslow, 1970), physical, emotional, and intellectual needs of people are interrelated. Within his hierarchy, Maslow determined that four basic needs must be met for students to reach their true potential: Esteem, belongingness and love, safety, and physiological needs. It is only after fulfilling these needs that humanity progresses to what he calls *growth needs*. The growth needs are the need to know and understand, aesthetic needs, and self-actualization (Maslow, 1970). Maslow held that students will have positive outcomes in the educational setting when they experience a feeling of self-fulfillment and have successful experiences.

Educators in today's schools who are attempting to tackle the dropout crisis need a better understanding of what schools can do to engage students and keep them on track to meet the graduation requirements needed to complete high school (Willms, 2003). There are a wide range of factors that can occur in elementary or middle school that can impel a student's effort and outcomes in high school, according to Rumberger and Lim, (2008). Norton's (1995) Quality Classroom Management study proposed that students might sometimes perceive a feeling of rejection and worthlessness in a teacher's classroom. These feelings of rejection may compel the student to display some observable behaviors as early as elementary school that identify the onset of disengagement. Some of the observable behaviors that Norton (1995) identified are:

- Unwilling or hesitant to complete tasks
- Resistant to additional efforts to gain their trust
- Rebellious and refusing to cooperate

- Avoidance by becoming truant
- Angry and withdrawn

When educators do not recognize and address these behaviors and feelings of rejection with a student, the process of disengagement from school begins for that student, thus increasing the likelihood of the student's dropping out of school. This research suggests that, given the pervasiveness of achievement problems and the rate of students dropping out of high school, school leaders must seek opportunities to promote activities that encourage the engagement of students within the school environment in order to produce more graduates.

In order for students to sense a feeling of entitlement to quality education, they must be provided quality instruction, high expectations for learning, and engagement in the school environment. Denial of these experiences or weakened opportunities will result in underachievement and dismal outcomes for students (Carter, 2003). Increasing children's opportunities to learn requires examining the inputs as much as outputs.

Policymakers at the local, state, and national level are focusing on educational outcomes and innovative strategies for schools. Examination of data that has been collected by each state indicated that 84% of states are not offering students the opportunity to achieve reasonably competent level of academic success, according to the Schott Foundation (2012). Furthermore, the research shows that African American and low-income students have only a portion of half the opportunity to learn in the current educational system as do their Caucasian peers.

Essentially, in order to increase the probability of graduation from high school for all students, educators must recognize the levels of engagement that are essential to

student success and implement strategies to keep them connected and enthusiastic about the school experience. Students who are engaged in the school environment are inclined to earn higher grades and test scores, feel a sense of belonging, successfully accomplish tasks, and achieve personal goals (Stout & Christenson, 2009). Educational practices that promote student engagement are on the agenda of school districts across the country and political platforms, because of the consistent research findings that indicate how significant they impact student outcomes (Christenson et al., 2008).

Exclusionary consequences. When surveyed, high school male dropouts conveyed that exclusionary discipline, such as suspensions and expulsions, was the principle reason for their failure to graduate from high school (Jordan, 1996). This research may imply that discipline incidents that result in exclusionary consequences have a more negative effect on males than on females (Jordan, 1996). Male students stated that they felt disengaged from the school culture at a higher rate than did females (Noguera, 2003).

African American male students are faced with the likelihood of being removed from school due to suspension at a rate that is more than 2.4 times that of males who are Caucasian and African American males are also much more likely to be retained at a rate 50% higher than Caucasian males, according to the National Center for Educational Statistics, (2010). The high school completion rate also shows a wide gap with 42% of African American males graduating within a 4-year timespan in 2006 equated to 71% of Caucasian males. Once dropping out of school, African American males commonly experience further misfortune. Within the 16- to 24-year-old group of African American males who are not involved in some type of education, more than half are unemployed;

nearly one-third of them are incarcerated, on probation, or on parole. Of the African American males who did not complete the 12th grade, only 31% are employed (Dillon, 2009). African American males are the demographic group that is most often unemployed and incarcerated (Holzman, 2004). The reasons for the dropout disparities vary, but one reason may be that needs are not being met.

It should be the goal of every instructional leader to make sure that these needs are provided to each learner. Learning environments that meet these needs tend to yield a positive change within academics, social behavior, and intrinsic drive of their students (Jensen, 2009). McLoughlin and Noltemeyer (2010) have shown that the economic status of students plays a pivotal role in the discipline that they receive. Their research reported that students who receive free and reduced lunch often receive a greater number of out-of-school suspensions, and students whose fathers are not consistently employed did so as well.

Instructional leaders must be willing to consider the needs of their surrounding community when responding to the challenging behavior of students (Ogbu, 2003). Many students who exhibit negative behaviors are simply reacting to the many impediments that plague their home life. Instructional leaders must be willing to accept that today's students require educators to fill in the gaps for the absence of parents, absence of homework, and sometimes the absence of social skills (Kafele, 2009).

Studies have also indicated that educators should have an intentional plan in place that is based statistical data and implemented by the entire school environment (McLoughlin & Noltemeyer, 2010). Implementing a strategic plan with fidelity is likely to have a positive outcome in the school environment and reduce the number of

exclusionary consequences of students, particularly African American males (Kafele, 2009). Finding successful strategies that promote consistent improvement with the behavioral and academic challenge of African American males is at the forefront of education reform efforts across the country (Kafele, 2009).

Inequality in Educational Outcomes for African American Males

Studies conducted over the last two decades have shown that African American males in the United States are at risk for many potentially damaging outcomes at the onset of their educational careers: retention, labeling as having special needs, exclusionary consequences, dropping out, and incarceration (Bailey & Moore, 2004; Polite & Davis, 1999). According to Bailey and Moore (2004), in many public schools throughout the nation, African American males are failing miserably. The differences that occur in the schools as they relate to academic performance, such as graduation rates, disproportionate placement into special education programs, inaccurate diagnoses of disabilities, and excessive exclusionary consequences from the general school setting, have caused a sense of social unacceptability for African American males (Sparks, 2010). The stressors associated with living in prolonged conditions of poverty can weaken self-development and damage the capacity for self-efficacy and self-determination (Jenson, 2009). Menzer and Hampel (2009) noted that African American males from low-income households, who were truant, improperly placed in special education, or retained in the same grade multiple times, were most at risk for dropping out than was any other subgroup. Additionally, these divergences in the educational practices and responses to behavioral effects are attributed to the educational obstructions that frequently hinder the achievement of African American males (Steele, 1997).

Dropout rate and failure to meet graduation requirements. The Schott Education for Public Education and Executive Summary (2008) identified some of the disparities that African American males face in urban school systems across America. National student performance data were explained in *Lost Opportunity: A 50-State Report on the Opportunity to Learn in America*, a report published by the Schott Foundation for Public Education (2009). The report examined the achievement data of students across the country as provided by state education departments to identify the level of access to quality education delivered in the United States (Schott, 2009). The urban districts that were included and identified as displaying the highest dropout rates for African American males were Chicago, New York, Detroit, Baltimore, and Miami. A common trend among these cities was the substantial number of segregated schools in high-poverty areas and extremely low test scores. The summary also highlighted that in 38 of the 50 states and Washington, D.C., African American males have the highest dropout rate among male and female students of all races. A substantial number of urban school districts were found to be providing a lower quality of education to African American students who were served in predominately African American, high-poverty area schools when compared to schools with a majority Caucasian student body.

Socioeconomic status. African Americans from low-income families comprise a growing percentage of the students who attend urban public schools (Noguera, 2003). However, educational opportunities for impoverished and minority students are typically substandard when compared to the programs and opportunities available to Caucasian students in middle class communities (Ogbu, 2003). African American male students who attend schools in which the dominant race of students is White typically have access

to more educational opportunities (Ogbu, 2003). African American students who attend high schools that are located in middle class neighborhoods have graduation rates that are comparable to those of other races (Balfanz & Legters, 2006), a finding that could be attributed to the property taxes that provide a substantial amount of financing to schools corresponding with the socioeconomic status of the parents. These taxes enable certain schools to have more than sufficient access to technology, state-of-the-art labs, extracurricular activities, and excellent textbooks (Strayhorn, 2009). Schott (2008) recorded that Black males enrolled in predominately White schools are able to experience a higher level of academic progress than do those who attend predominantly African American schools. Regrettably, the high schools that are situated in impoverished communities contain almost half of the country's minority student population (Balfanz & Legters, 2006). Harris (2006) suggested that the multifaceted web of social relationships that students experience, such as with peers, family, and adults in the community and school, significantly influence the students' academic goals.

Lower academic goals. Strayhorn (2009) studied the academic goals of African American males who were enrolled in high schools situated in rural, inner-city, and suburban communities. Results of the study proposed that African American males who were enrolled in suburban high schools had the greatest ambitions. Results of the study further indicated that African American males enrolled in urban high schools communicated comparatively low educational goals when equated to African American males who were enrolled in a suburban school setting. Although the study was limited due to the lack of preceding studies addressing the academic goals of African American males in rural, inner-city, or suburban locales, the study reinforced the Executive

Summary of the Schott Foundation for Public Education report (2008), which suggested that, when African American males enrolled in majority suburban or White schools, they reached a greater level of academic achievement.

Lower academic performance and higher dropout rate. The gap between the academic performance of African American males and students of other races is notable from the beginning of school and kindergarten and continues to increase. Research has presented a significant connection between the family socioeconomic status and the academic progress of students (Van Ijzendoorn, Vereijken, Bakersmans-Kranenburg, & Riksen-Walraven, 2004). This is partially attributed to lack of transportation and access to health care, chronic tardiness, and absenteeism. Similar studies have identified absenteeism as the most closely related factor to the dropout rate.

Increasing high school dropout rates is becoming the standard in numerous urban school districts (Jordan, 1996). Within these increasing dropout rates is an increasing number of African American and impoverished students (Carter, 2003). A study conducted by Schott, 2008 showed that somewhere between one-third and one-half of minority students fail to graduate from high school. The dropout rates as reported in 2008, were 9.9% for African Americans and 4.8% for Caucasians (Schott, 2008). African American and other minority groups account for the most significant increases in graduation rates, since 2001, according to Sparks (2010). African American males, however, still sustain the highest dropout rates in the country. Along with the racial disparities in the dropout rate, researchers have also identified differences in dropout rates between gender groups. Male students have a higher dropout rate than do female students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2010). When surveyed, high school

male dropouts conveyed that exclusionary discipline, such as suspensions and expulsions, was the principle reason for their failure to graduate from high school (Jordan et al., 1996). This research may imply that discipline incidents that result in exclusionary consequences may have a more negative effect on males than on females (McLouglin & Noltemeyer, 2010). Male students stated that they felt disengaged from the school culture at a higher rate than did females and ultimately drop out of high school at a higher rate (Greene & Winters, 2006).

Many American urban and suburban communities are plagued with the societal crisis of a gap in the achievement of African Americans and Caucasians. As a result, the individual minorities that reside in such communities are already at an academic and behavioral disadvantage. Research also challenges the all too common belief that such problems are not prevalent within suburban environments (Ogbu, 2003). Jordan (1996) suggested that these disadvantages among African Americans are not only represented in areas within the low-income inner city boundaries, but these researchers also identified that these gaps persist even in suburban environments. Despite the overall achievement gap, some African Americans have still been able to excel and overcome such adversities. The difference with these individuals is that they were somehow able to maintain a clear understanding of the purpose of education and where they wanted it to take them (Ogbu, 2003). These successes were due to the efforts of individuals who found a way to reach out and connect to these students (Ogbu, 2003).

Though most individuals have an understanding of who is being referenced when discussing "the Black community," Ginwright (2000) argued that society fails to meet the needs of individuals who are in low-economic areas by failing to acknowledge the group

as an economic status as opposed to an alternate culture. Teachers and administrators who are unfamiliar with cultural experiences and learned behaviors of the students will often consider the students unruly and disrespectful (Jensen, 2009). Responses to student behavior in the school environment can have a severe, negative impact on the self-esteem of students and can affect their academic achievement; however, the culture aspect is only a part of the whole that affects the urban and suburban community schools' success (Ogbu, 2003).

Factors That May Influence Educational Outcomes

Stereotype threat. Strayhorn (2009) proposed that the fundamental issue facing African American males in this society is that they are incapable of defining themselves beyond the damaging stereotypes that have been set by the culture of the larger community around them. African American males tend to assume the views and stereotypes of failure to succeed and inferior cognitive abilities and thus acquire views of failure and negativity about their own lives and education. Historically, the United States has had a culture of beliefs that African Americans are inferior to Whites since slavery. Research has offered rebuttal to this continued belief by proving that African Americans do have the ability to emerge from the level of inferiority and achieve success (Hoberman, 2000). Hoberman (2000) noted that the belief of African American academic inferiority has negatively affected the self-image of these students with relation to their education.

Research indicates that the problem of stereotyping significantly influences student achievement and contributes to the gap in achievement between African American and Caucasian students (Steele & Aronson, 1995). Stereotype threat is tension triggered by

apprehension that the behavior of a person may actually prove a negative stereotype about a certain demographic of people (Spencer & Steele, 1994). Steele and Aronson (1995) identified stereotype threat as an explanation for the gap that is still evident after all other factors have been controlled. Historically, African American males are impressed by the negative perceptions and stereotypes regarding their behavior throughout American society. African American males are often described by the use of such degrading word as lazy, criminal, unintelligent, or dangerous (Strayhorn, 2009) further hypothesized that African American students, on average, feel greater amounts of stress in the educational setting, because they are aware that performing below par would validate the negative stereotype about the academic competence of African Americans. An additional corollary of the stereotype threat is that sometimes African American students may choose to not finish the work and be perceived as defiant or indolent instead of having the identification of someone with low intelligence if the answers are not correct (Steele, 1997).

Stereotype threat is a contributing factor to the achievement gap, when the threat is not reduced, thus leading to the issue of the large number of African American males who are diagnosed with learning disabilities and placed in special education. To support this reasoning, Steele and Aronson (1995) conducted a series of experiments to demonstrate that making African American students susceptible to the judgmental types of stereotypes regarding their intelligence lowered their academic success in relation to Caucasian students. Creating environments that relieve this threat prior to testing improved the performance of African American males, likening the two groups, once their differences were controlled. A critical implication of the research by Steele and

Aronson (1995) is that stereotype threat is a source of historic deficits in standardized test performance exhibited by African Americans and other groups that are considered stereotype threat groups, such as students of lower socioeconomic status (Spencer & Steele, 1994). The focus in the research around stereotype threat has been on group identity and social context and how the two work together to reconcile a significant behavior.

In searching for ways to close the achievement gap for African American males, some researchers and supporters of high school athletics have argued that participation in high school athletic programs improves students' motivation and grades and increases academic performance and opportunity (Rasmussen, 2000). Rasmussen's study focused predominantly on White males; however, it highlighted the idea that participation by African American males in high school athletic programs has a positive impact on academic achievement as well. Sailes (1998) asserted that participation in athletics is a vital part of African American male socialization. Excellence in sports offers the best chance to demonstrate African American aptitude combined with an opportunity to improve future lifestyles (Hoberman, 1997). Students who participate in athletic programs increase the chances of pursuing higher education through opportunities for scholarships and the enhancement of self-discipline and self-motivation. This would make student athletes more likely to have access to higher education.

Arguably, academics and sports do not work well together. There are educators who believe that the two work against each other in a competitive manner. (Hoberman, 1997). The energy used to improve the academic performance of students; nonetheless, is not in vain. While influence from other students does have an impact on the

motivation of African American males to achieve, verbal and material acknowledgement from the larger society can minimize or eliminate this threat (Hoberman, 1997). It is critical that African American males learn that taking advantage of the opportunity to receive an education is the key to success (Cokley, 2003). Often, parents and students feel that participation in athletics in high school will provide the best opportunity to learn, even if it means moving or transferring to a school other than the one assigned by the school district (Rumberger & Lim, 2008).

Student mobility. Much of the research on student transfer reasons for African American students focuses on both the antecedents and outcomes of school transfer with regard to negative consequences (Rumberger & Lim, 2008). Research suggests that transferring schools can allow some students to have access to greater educational opportunities and social development (Chubb & Moe, 1990). Certain researchers contend that transferring to a new school might function as a preventive measure in terms of averting dropout (Lee & Burkam, 1992) or provide a chance to enroll in a higher performing school (Hanushek, Kain, Markman, & Rivkin, 2003). Some of this uncertainty in findings may result from the many defeating precursors from the personal circumstances of transfer students and the events precipitating an impromptu school transfer.

For instance, students from disrupted, nontraditional families or disrupted homes experience more school transitions, on average, than do those residing with both natural parents (Astone & McLanahan, 1994). Residential and school transitions are also linked to socioeconomic status. Although certain research identifies a correlation between low socioeconomic status and high student transfers (Warren-Sohlberg, Jason, Orosan-Wein,

& Lantz, 1998), other research identifies a positive relationship between socioeconomic status and student transfers (Astone & McLanahan, 1994). Another ostensibly contrary finding is that Catholic school students, though less likely to drop out of high school than their non-Catholic peers, are more likely to switch schools than are their peers (Larson & Rumberger, 1998). Higher levels of behavioral difficulties, lower academic achievement, and decreased educational expectations (Astone & McLanahan, 1994) are more of the many ways in which investigators have identified that transfer students differ from nontransfer students prior to changing school enrollment.

Astone and McLanahan (1994) showed that another limitation of the current research on student transfers is that many studies only approximate the effect of both transferring schools and moving to a different residence, even though a significant number of school transfers occur as a result of a residential move (Larson & Rumberger, 1998) and conversely (Larson & Rumberger, 1998). A single study that used a nationally representative dataset to understand the independent impact of each possible type of transfer concluded that math and reading test scores decreased only when students concurrently changed high schools and residences (Astone & McLanahan, 1994).

While no extensive study on school transfers was found to weigh the reasons student transfers may differentially sway these students' outcomes (Astone & McLanahan, 1994), a number of articles provide a comprehensive conceptualization of the students who transfer high schools (Astone & McLanahan, 1994). Larson and Rumberger (1998) proposed that transferring to a new high school could serve to guard against some students' dropping out of school. Hanushek et al. (2003), although agreeing that some concurrent events happening along with changing schools may bring negative

outcomes for students, argue that researchers must reflect on how parents purposefully transfer their children to schools that offer a more advanced level of educational quality and more extracurricular opportunities. Researchers have also noted that some of the parents who are economically disadvantaged may not be able to obtain accurate statistics and factual information regarding school programs and performance to make well-informed choices and enroll their children in the schools that have shown high performance levels (Ogbu, 2003).

A study conducted in the Tulsa, Oklahoma, school district (Rabovsky, 2011) included interviews conducted with high school administrators to identify reasons students transferred in and out of the high schools in Tulsa. There were some significant reasons about why students transfer voiced by administrators. First, several students pursued entrance into the district's magnet school programs that offer more challenging academic options than the school in the neighborhoods in which they live. Second, a substantial number of students transferred for reasons identified as safety and largely tied to behavioral problems or personality struggles with school personnel or fellow students. Other common responses were the location of the school and the availability of transportation to the school of choice, followed by their own behavior or disciplinary issues, academic success or test results, specialized programs or instructional offerings, and views about neighborhood physiognomies and demographics of the existing students. Though principals in this district identified the school's performance and available curriculum as the most common reasons for student transfers, a substantial number identified factors outside of academics as the primary motivation, such as athletic programs (Rabovsky, 2011). Students who seek to transfer for the purpose of

participating in athletic programs have been closely scrutinized for this move (Rabovsky, 2011).

Larson and Rumberger (1998) identified some alarming factors related to student mobility and its effect on student outcomes. Children under the age of 5 relocate to a new residence annually at a rate of 22%. This rate is much higher for students living in poverty. This is a much more common occurrence in urban communities than in rural and suburban areas. The reality in urban schools that are situated in impoverished areas is that, by the end of the school year, only 22 out of 24 students may have been in the same school on the first day (Larson & Rumberger, 1998). The students who are most often transient at the highest rate are African American males, particularly those who live in poverty. The outcome for at least two out of five students who move from school to school is that they are habitually functioning below grade level in critical academic areas such as reading and math (Larson & Rumberger, 1998). High rates of student mobility contribute greatly to various negative and long-term outcomes that limit the potential for success of African American males in poverty.

Benefits of athletic participation and eligibility standards. Research has shown the benefits of athletic participation on many aspects of life; yet, studies on the impact of athletic participation on African American males relative to academic achievement have offered differing outcomes. Much of the research reveals little or no statistical significance in the differences in academic achievement of these athletes and their peers who do not participate in athletics (Hartman, 2008). The coach-athlete relationship has been researched, and a significant amount of the research has identified

this as a positive relationship that helps to improve athletic performance and positively impacts other important behavioral and developmental variables (Hirsh, 2009).

The creation of athletic eligibility requirements was intended to motivate student-athletes to perform better in academic courses and attend school regularly (Hoch, 2008). The rule that students must pass in order to play in athletic sports programs was introduced in Texas in 1984 and quickly spread to other states (Bukowski, 2001). The reasoning behind the athletic eligibility rule was that students (and their coaches) would work to increase academic performance while still participating in athletics (Hoch, 2008). This reasoning suggests a relationship between athletic participation and academic achievement and that students can be driven to improve their academic performance by their desire to be involved in athletics.

Eligibility standards have now been passed in all states; however, these requirements vary somewhat from state to state. States that have less stringent eligibility requirements defend them by saying that athletics may be the thing that motivates a student to remain in school as opposed to dropping out (Bukowski, 2001). Four particular areas of eligibility identified by Littlefield (1987) as common in most of the states' eligibility standards for athletic participation are a minimum GPA, a maximum number of classes that an athlete is allowed to fail, a set time frame for the suspension of an athlete who violates the academic requirements, and obedience to the stated guidelines for the state athletic association. Bukowski (2001) studied 125 schools across the country and looked at the range of athletic participation requirements. The GPA requirement varied from no minimum GPA to a 2.5 GPA. Schools that did not have a minimum GPA requirement for athletic participation identified an acceptable grade percentage, such as

70%. Bukowski (2001) did not address the inconsistency across the states in relation to the acceptable number of classes in which an athlete must enroll, the number of failed courses allowed, and required attendance.

Bukowski (2001) determined that the number of athletes who were determined to be ineligible for athletic participation in schools with high eligibility standards was not statistically different from the number of ineligible athletes at schools with low eligibility standards. This research suggests a positive effect on the academic performance of athletes for reasons other than motivation to meet eligibility standards. The concept of self-determination has been used to enlighten the discussion on the disparity in student learning strategies, perseverance, and outcomes for African American male students in high school (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Deci and Ryan (1987) found through their investigation that humans are preemptive, concerned with personal growth, and capable. Inherent in this theory is the idea that motivation for certain behaviors is delimited by either external influence or personal choice (Young, Johnson, Hawthorne, & Pugh, 2011). With respect to motivational factors in academic areas, self-determination theory identifies three areas of motivation: intrinsic, extrinsic, and amotivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

The Self-Determination Theory (Vansteenkiste et al., 2006) identifies a scope of behavior that can be internally or extrinsically motivated. Self-determined behavior is intrinsic when a person chooses to behave in a manner that is not motivated by external influences. Actions that are influenced by external forces are considered controlled behavior and are extrinsically motivated. Those who engage in behaviors without a connection to a particular outcome can be identified as amotivated (Deci & Ryan, 1987).

Type of educational motivation has been associated with educational outcomes for students (Deci & Ryan, 2000). For instance, it is more probable that those who are intrinsically motivated will pursue postsecondary degrees and enter a career that is enjoyable to them. Those students who are motivated largely by extrinsic factors are not as likely to pursue postsecondary degrees or enter careers of true personal interest.

A limited amount of research exists around motivational factors for African American male students. However, research does suggest that African American males may be more intrinsically motivated in predominately Black educational settings and that extrinsic factors are more prevalent in other settings that do not relate to the cultural experiences of African Americans (Cokley, 2003).

Athletic participation and academic self-concept. The idea of academic self-concept is described as the manner in which a student identifies his or her own ability in relation to that of others (Cokley, 2000). Graham (1994) related academic self-concept to motivation and academic achievement, because those students who are more confident in their own abilities experience a higher rate of academic focus. Educational and social environments that are nurturing and supportive enrich academic self-concepts of students and improve their academic performance and development (Graham, 1994).

A significant number of African American males transfer to different high schools and later participate in some type of athletic program (Rabovsky, 2011). Participation in athletic programs is often viewed as an opportunity for African American males to gain a higher level of respect, power, and social progress (Riess, 1980; Sabo et al., 1993). Other societal groups who typically would not readily accept the inclusion of African American males are likely to accept their participation in athletics (Sailes, 1998). Recognizing this

concept may cause some African American families to foster participation in athletics for their male children (Sailes, 1998). The increased focus on athletics, however, could deter a student's motivation to devote more time and effort to educational achievement. This has the potential to make a student fall behind more studious peers. Some researchers have found that participation in athletics can indeed enhance the academic achievement process for African American males (Sabo & Vanfossen, 1993). These researchers agree that, by providing additional networks that are useful for social mobility, opportunities develop that enhance work ethic and opportunities to learn valuable life lessons for the students.

Possible negative outcomes of athletic participation. Contrary to the above research, Sailes (1998) found that participation in sports for African American males distracts them from educational goals, largely because of the high level of commitment to the sport and the belief that sports will be the primary road to economic success. The overrepresentation of African American males in athletics may contribute to the disregard of academic excellence (Beamon & Bell, 2006). Pursuit of a career in sports may come at the expense of an education, according to Sailes (1998).

A study conducted by Bechtol in 2001 resulted in the theory that participation in high school sports does have a long-term, positive effect on students. This theory is grounded in the belief that high school sports are beneficial to students, even after completion of high school. The study considered the continuing effects that participating in high school athletics had on students by studying structural elements such as school size, adult role models, demographic makeup of the school, physical location, behavior, and personal goals of the students who participated. The specific factors considered were

curriculum, size of school, and adult role models. The personal factors considered to affect the outcomes for student participants were gender, behavior, race, and personal goals. Results of the study revealed that the lasting effects on students included competitiveness, physical fitness, positive peer relationships, and development of leadership skills, higher self-esteem, and a greater focus on personal goals.

The Southern Regional Educational Board (SREB) (Montgomery, 2010) supported the Sports Participation Theory (Bechtol, 2001) and asserted that schools should prepare students to adapt to a changing society by giving them the necessary skills outside of academics. Participation in high school sports programs has been considered as a way to validate the view of the SREB (Bechtol, 2001).

The influence of athletic participation on athletic achievement has been the source of debate for a number of years (Beamon & Bell, 2006). Coaches and physical education professionals agree that athletic participation results in physiological, psychological, educational, and social benefits to students (Stout & Christenson, 2009). Further studies by Corneliben and Pfeifer (2007) determined that sports participation develops skills such as management ability, teamwork, and socialization. Corneliben and Pfeifer (2007) also concluded that sports influences the character of students, because athletic participation enhances such qualities as motivation, self-discipline, persistence, responsibility, and confidence, which cannot always be developed in African American males in a classroom setting.

In spite of the research that correlates athletic participation and positive academic achievement, whether or not athletics weakens the academic outcomes for athletes is debatable (Beamon & Bell, 2006). Most experiential studies note considerable positive

associations between participation in athletics for African American males and academic and achievement outcomes (Graham, 1994). Participation in athletics has been found to increase the likelihood of plans to enroll in college for students who might not otherwise set college as a long-term goal (Hawkins & Mulkey, 2005). Athletic participation has also been found to reduce the likelihood that African American males will drop out of high school (Kafele, 2009). Marsh (1993) determined that participation in athletics in high school improves the students' sense of purpose and enthusiasm about school, which has a positive effect academically. Hawkins and Mulkey (2005) found that those African American males who participated in athletics generated thoughts and dreams that allowed them to envision higher education as a possibility and forced them to behave while in high school.

Summary

This literature review suggests that numerous factors can impact the academic achievement of African American males in high school. Whether or not participation in athletic programs positively impacts the academic outcomes for these students continues to be a question. The literature presents the belief that some African American males who transfer schools do so because of an expectation of receiving better opportunities for academic and athletic success. The next chapter will describe the research methodology of the study.

Chapter 3

Research Methodology

This chapter describes the methodology used in the study. Included in this chapter are the research questions, an academic and athletic profile of the school district used in the study including the 2008-2009 school-year enrollments, research design, description of instruments to be used to analyze the data, and a summary of the methodology.

Purpose of the Study

Previous research has implied that participation in high school athletics promotes favorable academic outcomes among students (Bukowski, 2001). On the contrary, other researchers have determined that there is no connection between participation in athletic programs and improved academic performance for children in urban communities (Fisher et al., 1996). For the purpose of this study, the researcher seeks to determine whether or not participation and nonparticipation in high school athletics has a direct impact on the academic achievement of African American males.

Research Questions

1. As defined by cumulative GPA, is there a statistically significant difference in the academic performance of African American males by their participation in high school athletics, their socioeconomic status, and the interaction of these two factors?
2. As defined by composite ACT score, is there a statistically significant difference in the academic performance of African American males by their participation in high school athletics, their socioeconomic status, and the interaction of these two factors?

3. As defined by high school completion rate, is there a statistically significant difference in the academic performance of African American males by their participation in high school athletics, their socioeconomic status, and the interaction of these two factors?

Research Methodology

Quantitative research involves "data that is measureable and can include statistical results, financial data, or demographic data" (QFINANCE, 2009, p.1). This quantitative research compared (a) the cumulative GPAs for core content areas in language arts, math, science, and social studies with (b) the GPAs of students participating in athletic activities, (c) completion of graduation requirements, and (d) student ACT scores. The data include African American male students who participated in high school athletics and those who did not participate in high school athletics. This research was conducted to determine whether athletic participation had an impact on academic achievement and completion of high school for African American males in a large urban school district. These relationships are explored by using secondary data. Secondary data are data previously collected by someone else for a different purpose (Boslaugh, 2012). The most commonly used method of research with secondary data is to start with a research question and identify a data set that will lend itself to the analysis of that question (Boslaugh, 2012). The secondary data analyzed in this study are from the student information system archives of the school district the students attended.

Secondary data analysis is defined by Hakim (2007) as "further analysis of an existing data-set which presents interpretations, conclusions, or knowledge additional to,

or different from, those presented in the first report on the data collection and its results (p. 1)." Some particular uses for secondary data analysis are:

- Reports focusing on a certain subtopic (e.g., unemployment) or social group (e.g., ethnic minority)
- Concentrated reports (e.g., analysis of a social area based on selected social indicators)
- Detailed reports (offering additional detail on the same subject)
- Reports concerning a specific policy issue or question
- Analyses centered around a theory or framework not used in the original report
- Additional analytical techniques used to test hypotheses and answer questions with a more comprehensive and precise approach than the original report. (Hakim, 2007)

The uses considered by Hakim (2007) suggest that secondary analysis can be used to answer the five research questions in the present study. First, the reports derived from this study focus on a particular social group: African American males. Second, the report offers additional detail on the same topic (Hakim, 2007); the concept of analyzing the relationships between participation of high school African American males in athletics with that of cumulative GPA, composite ACT score, and completion of graduation requirements was not analyzed in the prior report.

Population and Sample of the Study

The school district is located in a metropolitan area in a southern state. The school district in this study included 212 schools and 101,696 students in 2008, when the study cohort entered high school. During the 2008-2009 school year, the district's total student population consisted of 96,118 African Americans, 8,040 Caucasians, 5,943 Hispanics, 1,397 Asian/Pacific Islanders, and 106 Native American/Alaskans. There were 43 high schools in the urban district, with African Americans comprising 82.7% of the student population (Tennessee State Report Card, 2008).

The student data included schools with similar curriculum criterions and requirements, as well as the diversity of socioeconomic backgrounds of the African American males who attended the schools. All of the schools had African American male students who did and did not participate in high school athletics. This cohort includes 4,801 African American male students, with 1,218 having participated in an athletic activity while attending high school. According to the Tennessee State Report Card (2012), the cohort dropout rate for the district in this study was 16.4%, and the graduation rate was 70.3%. The state's cohort dropout rate was 6.9%, and the graduation rate across the state was 87.2%, making the gap approximately 17% for this district and others in the same state.

Research Design

This study is a secondary analysis of existing data, using African American male students who entered high school in 2008 (2012 cohort graduation year).

Data are categorical, and the dependent variable is the academic achievement scores based on the following:

1. Cumulative GPA
2. Socioeconomic status
3. Composite ACT score
4. Completion of graduation requirements

The independent variables are participation or nonparticipation in an athletic activity, SES, and the type of athletic activity. The types of available activities are football, track, golf, tennis, soccer, bowling, wrestling, and baseball. All of the schools to be studied have TSSAA-sanctioned athletic programs. Only sanctioned athletic programs are in this study. Students in these sports had the opportunity to compete in state tournaments for state championship titles.

The researcher controlled for the following variables: participant demographics (gender and ethnicity), schools involved in the study, use of GPA, and selected year for the GPAs. There was not a minimum GPA requirement for participants to be included in the study.

The inferential statistics (two-way ANOVA) method was used to examine if participation or nonparticipation in high school athletics and socioeconomic status (SES) had an impact on the academic achievement of African American males. Researchers frequently elect to study specific variables with inferential statistics to compare mean scores of two or more groups. Inferential statistics includes multiple statistical significance tests that researchers can elect to use to construct inferences regarding the sample data used (Balakrishnan, 2014). Based on the intended purpose, these tests can

be separated into three groups: examining relationships, assessing differences, and making predictions (Balakrishnan, 2014). In this study, two-way ANOVA and Chi-Squared tests were used to study the effects of athletic participation and SES on academic achievement for African American males.

Data Collection

Prior to the start of the collection data process, the researcher secured permission from the Research and Planning Office of the district in the study by using an online data request form available on the district's website (Appendix B). Anyone interested in the use of data from the district must submit a request that includes purpose, specific use, and timeline data. The district provided written approval to use the data and an electronic spreadsheet of the requested data to the researcher. All information identifying specific students was removed by the district research office prior to releasing data to the researcher. Also, the researcher requested permission from the University of Memphis' Internal Review Board (IRB) prior to beginning the study, asking to use the student data previously collected by the school district. The IRB gave written approval to begin the study (Appendix C).

Data Analysis

Once the researcher compiled the data in a spreadsheet, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 22 was used to analyze the descriptive statistics. SPSS is one of the most commonly used programs for statistical analysis in the social science and is used by education, government, and health researchers and survey companies (Nie, Dale, & Hull, 1970). SPSS allows average researchers to perform their own statistical analysis (Nie et al., 1970). The researcher searched for statistical

significance at the 0.05 level. The independent variables were participation or nonparticipation in an athletic activity, SES, and the type of athletic activity. The dependent variables were the cumulative GPAs of the students, composite ACT scores, and completion of graduation requirements.

Statistical Tests

Research question 1/hypothesis 1 was investigated simultaneously with a two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). The independent variables were athletic participation status with two levels (participation, nonparticipation) and SES with two levels (yes, no) as defined by whether or not students were on free or reduced lunch. The dependent variable was cumulative GPA. In a two-way ANOVA, three hypotheses were tested: two main effects, and an interaction (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2000). The two main effects were tested in hypotheses 1 and 2. The interaction was tested in hypothesis 3.

Similarly, research questions 4-6/hypotheses 4-6 were investigated simultaneously with a two-way ANOVA. The independent variables were athletic participation status with two levels (participation, nonparticipation) and SES with two levels (yes, no) as defined by whether or not students were on free or reduced lunch. The dependent variable was composite ACT score.

Research question 7/hypothesis 7 was investigated with a 2 X 2 chi-square test. The independent variable was athletic participation with two levels (participation, nonparticipation). The dependent variable was high school completion with two levels (yes, no). High school completion was a nominal variable in the data set measured by whether students withdrew from high school or obtained certificates of attendance, regular diplomas, or special education diplomas. From these categories, two categories

were created for high school completion (yes, no). Therefore, two-way ANOVAs and one chi-square test was conducted to test all seven research questions and hypotheses. Table 1 provides a summary of the hypotheses, independent/dependent variables, and scales of measurement.

Table 1

Summary of Hypotheses, Independent/Dependent Variables, and Scales of Measurement

Hypothesis	Statistical Test	Independent Variable/Scale of Measurement	Dependent Variable/Scale of Measurement
H_{01}: There is no significant difference in academic performance as defined by cumulative GPA relative to the participation or nonparticipation of African American males in high school athletics.	two-way ANOVA	Athletic participation/Nominal	GPA/Interval
H_{02}: There is no significant difference in academic performance as defined by cumulative GPA relative to the SES of African American males.	two-way ANOVA	SES/Nominal	GPA/Interval
H_{03}: There is no significant interaction between the SES and participation or nonparticipation of African American males in high school athletics on academic performance as defined by cumulative GPA.	two-way ANOVA	Athletic participation/Nominal SES/Nominal	GPA/Interval

Table 1 (continued)

Summary of Hypotheses, Independent/Dependent Variables, and Scales of Measurement

Hypothesis	Statistical Test	Independent Variable/Scale of Measurement	Dependent Variable/Scale of Measurement
H_{04}: There is no significant difference in academic performance as defined by composite ACT score relative to the participation or nonparticipation of African American males in high school athletics.	two-way ANOVA	Athletic participation/Nominal	ACT composite score/Interval
H_{05}: There is no significant difference in academic performance as defined by composite ACT score relative to the SES of African American males.	two-way ANOVA	SES/Nominal	ACT composite score/Interval
H_{06}: There is no significant interaction between the SES and participation or nonparticipation of African American males in high school athletics on academic performance as defined by composite ACT score.	two-way ANOVA	Athletic participation/Nominal SES/Nominal	ACT composite score/Interval
H_{07}: There is no significant difference in the high school completion rates of African American males relative to their participation or nonparticipation in high school athletics.	Chi-Square	Athletic participation/Nominal	High School Completion/Nominal

Power Analysis

A power analysis was conducted with G*Power 3.1 (Faul, Erfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007). With a small effect size (f = .10) and a power level of .95, with one degree of freedom in the numerator and four groups, a sample size of 1,302 is required (Figure 1).

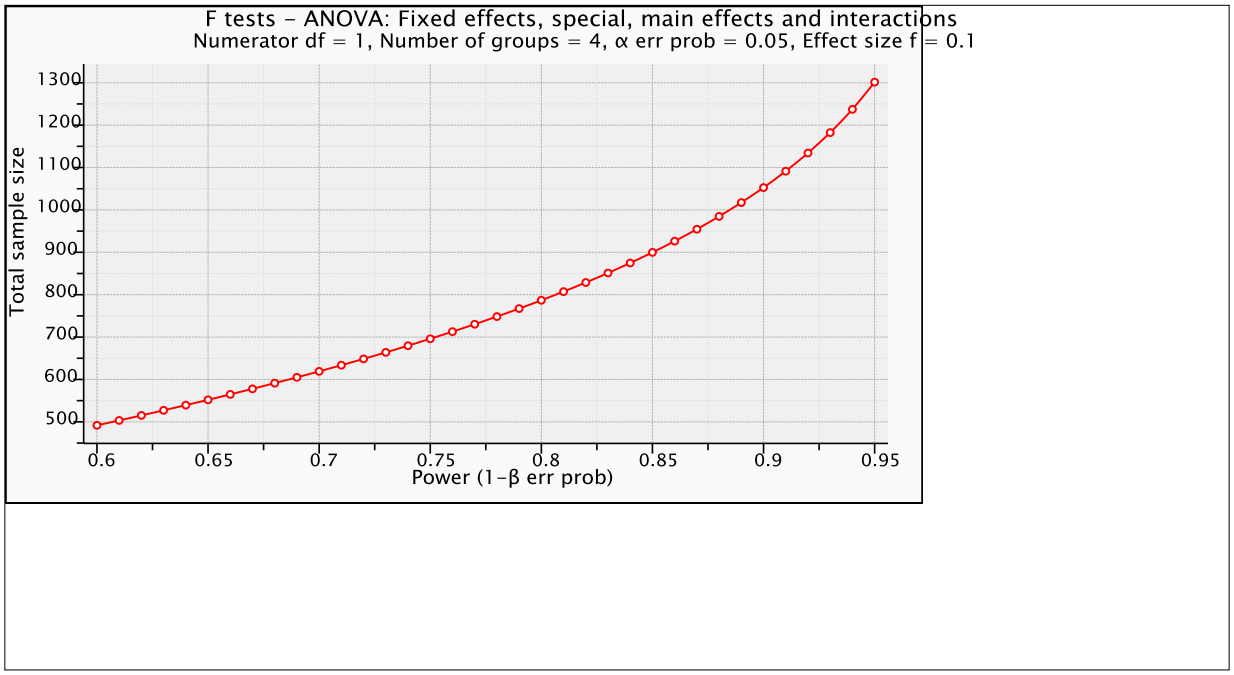

Figure 1. Power Analysis

Since the data for this study were secondary data from a school district with over 3,000 cases fitting the inclusion criteria, it the dataset was more than adequate to detect significant differences if they exist.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to provide a description of the research methodology of this study. This chapter also described the population of the study, the data necessary to conduct the study, and statistical analyses that were used to answer the research questions. The next chapter provides the results of the statistical analyses of the compiled data.

Chapter 4

Results

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine whether or not participation and nonparticipation in high school athletics had a direct impact on the academic achievement of African American males. The results from this research may provide insight for educational administrators and researchers into the reasons African American males are not achieving at the same level as their peers of other races. In addition, the study may provide an understanding of the relationship between socioeconomic status (SES) and athletic participation. Moreover, the study aimed to assist school districts in their efforts to increase achievement and graduation rates among African American males.

Prior to the start of the data collection process, the researcher secured permission from the Research and Planning Office of the district in the study. The district provided written approval to use the data and an electronic spreadsheet of the requested data to the researcher, upon approval. The district research office, prior to releasing data to the researcher, removed all identifying information of students. Also, the researcher requested permission from the University of Memphis' Internal Review Board prior to beginning the study, asking to use the student data previously collected by the school district. The IRB gave written approval to begin the study.

The data were provided in a Microsoft Excel Spreadsheet and then imported into SPSS 23 for analysis. Chapter 4 is organized by a discussion of the sample demographics, descriptive statistics, data screening, research questions and hypothesis testing, and conclusions. The following provides a discussion of the sample demographics.

Sample Demographics

Data were obtained on 9,788 students; from this number, data were extracted on 2,890 students meeting the inclusion criteria of African American males (AAM). Among the AAM, 37.9% (*n* = 1,096) participated in athletics, whereas 62.1% (*n* = 1,794) did not participate. Regarding the type if AAMs completed, 1.4% (*n* = 40) had certificates of attendance, 94% (*n* = 2,716) had regular diplomas, and 4.6% (*n* = 134) had special education diplomas. Thus, 94% (*n* = 2,716) completed high school and 6% (*n* = 174) did not. The majority of AAMs (90.4%, *n* = 2,612) were economically disadvantaged, whereas 9.6% (*n* = 278) were not. The specific type of sports students participated in was provided on 672 AAMs. As presented in Table 2, the three most popular sports were football (12.2%, *n* = 354), basketball (2.9%, *n* = 83), and cross country (2.1%, *n* = 62).

Table 2

High School Athletics

Sport		*n*	*%*
	Not Provided	2218	76.7
	Baseball	53	1.8
	Boys Basketball	83	2.9
	Boys Bowling	33	1.1
	Boys Cross Country	62	2.1
	Boys Golf	16	0.6
	Boys Soccer	8	0.3
	Boys Swimming	2	0.1
	Boys Tennis	10	0.3
	Boys Track	41	1.4
	Football	354	12.2
	Wrestling	10	0.3
	Total	2890	100.0

Descriptive Statistics and Data Screening

Scores on the American College Test composite ranged from 6 to 35 (M = 15.62, SD = 3.49). Grade point averages ranged from 0.6 to 4.2 (M = 2.22, SD = 0.76). The data were screened for normality with skewness and kurtosis statistics and also with histograms. In SPSS, when the absolute values of the skewness and kurtosis coefficients are less than two times the standard errors, the distributions are considered to be normal. Skewness and kurtosis coefficients are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Skewness and Kurtosis Coefficients

Variable	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
ACT Composite	1.10	.052	1.55	.105
GPA	-.026	.046	-.379	.091

Based on the above criteria, the distribution for the ACT composite score had a significant positive skew. Upon further examination of the histogram, however, the distribution did not appear to be significantly skewed (Figure 2).

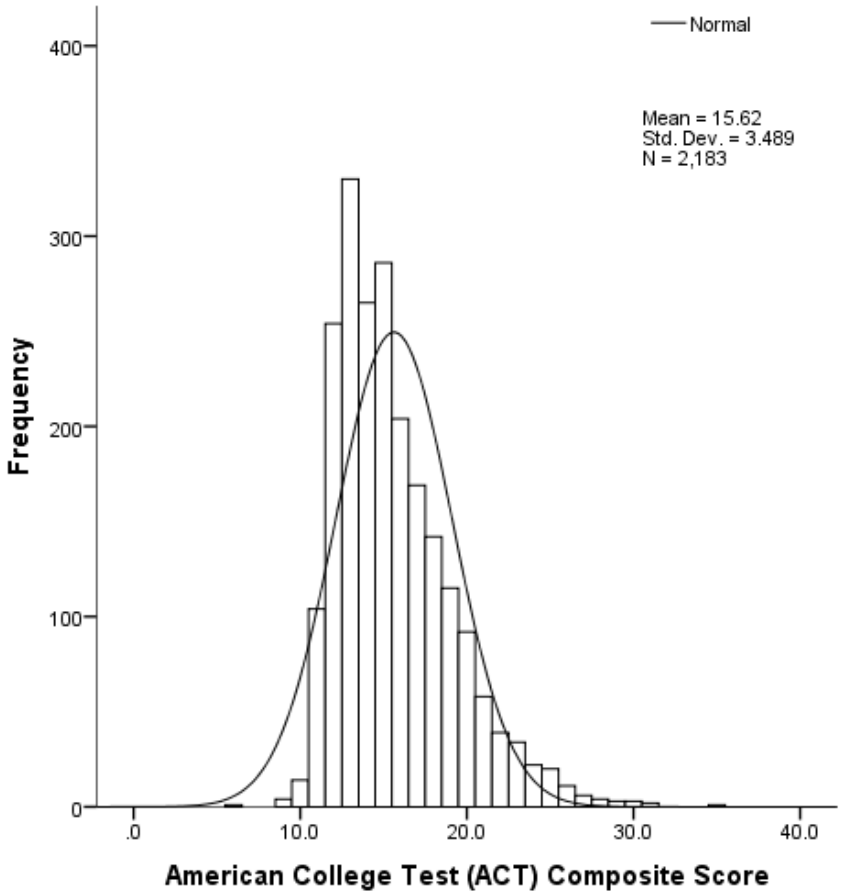

Figure 2. Histogram for American College Test (ACT) Composite Score

The distribution for student GPA was within normal limits relative to skewness. Figure 3 provides a histogram of student GPA.

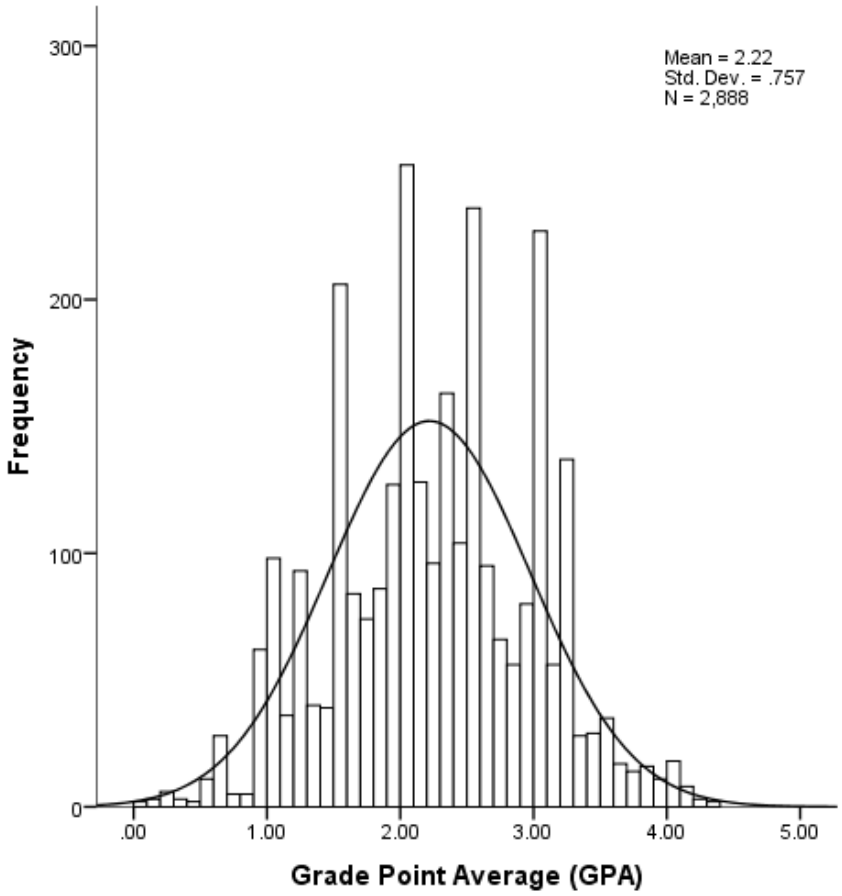

Figure 3. Histogram for Grade Point Average (GPA)

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Seven research questions and seven related hypotheses were formulated for investigation:

1. To what extent is there a difference in academic performance as defined by cumulative GPA relative to the participation or nonparticipation of African American males in high school athletics?

   H_{01}: There is no significant difference in academic performance as defined by cumulative GPA relative to the participation or nonparticipation of African American males in high school athletics.

H_1: There is a significant difference in academic performance as defined by cumulative GPA relative to the participation or nonparticipation of African American males in high school athletics.

2. To what extent is there a difference in academic performance as defined by cumulative GPA relative to the SES of African American males?

   H_{02}: There is no significant difference in academic performance as defined by cumulative GPA relative to the SES of African American males.

   H_2: There is a significant difference in academic performance as defined by cumulative GPA relative to the SES of African American males.

3. To what extent is there an interaction between the SES and participation or nonparticipation of African American males in high school athletics on academic performance as defined by cumulative GPA?

   H_{03}: There is no significant interaction between the SES and participation or nonparticipation of African American males in high school athletics on academic performance as defined by cumulative GPA.

   H_3: There is a significant interaction between the SES and participation or nonparticipation of African American males in high school athletics on academic performance as defined by cumulative GPA.

4. To what extent is there a difference in academic performance as defined by composite ACT score relative to the participation or nonparticipation of African American males in high school athletics?

H_{04}: There is no significant difference in academic performance as defined by composite ACT score relative to the participation or nonparticipation of African American males in high school athletics.

H_4: There is a significant difference in academic performance as defined by composite ACT score relative to the participation or nonparticipation of African American males in high school athletics.

5. To what extent is there a difference in academic performance as defined by composite ACT score relative to the SES of African American males?

   H_{05}: There is no significant difference in academic performance as defined by composite ACT score relative to the SES of African American males.

   H_5: There is a significant difference in academic performance as defined by composite ACT score relative to the SES of African American males.

6. To what extent is there an interaction between the SES and participation or nonparticipation of African American males in high school athletics on academic performance as defined by composite ACT score?

   H_{06}: There is no significant interaction between the SES and participation or nonparticipation of African American males in high school athletics on academic performance as defined by composite ACT score.

   H_6: There is no significant interaction between the SES and participation or nonparticipation of African American males in high school athletics on academic performance as defined by composite ACT score.

7. To what extent is there a difference in the high school completion rates of African American males relative to their participation or nonparticipation in high school athletics?

   H_{07}: There is no significant difference in the high school completion rates of African American males relative to their participation or nonparticipation in high school athletics.

   H_7: There is no significant difference in the high school completion rates of African American males relative to their participation or nonparticipation in high school athletics.

Research Questions 1-3/Hypotheses 1-3

Research questions 1-3/hypotheses 1-3 were investigated simultaneously with a two-way ANOVA. The independent variables were athletic participation status with two levels (participation, nonparticipation) and SES with two levels (yes, no) as defined by whether or not students were on free or reduced lunch. The dependent variable was cumulative GPA. In a two-way ANOVA, three hypotheses were tested; two main effects, and an interaction. The two main effects were tested in hypotheses 1 and 2; the interaction was tested in hypothesis 3. Group means are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Group Means for Research Questions 1-3/Hypotheses 1-3				
Athletic Participation	Economically Disadvantaged	*M*	*SD*	*N*
Nonparticipation	No	2.25	0.83	156
	Yes	2.11	0.77	1636
	Total	2.12	0.77	1792
Participation	No	2.52	0.77	121
	Yes	2.36	0.69	975
	Total	2.38	0.70	1096
Total	No	2.37	0.81	277
	Yes	2.20	0.75	2611
	Total	2.22	0.76	2888

Note. Dependent variable = Cumulative GPA.

The summary for research questions 1-3/hypotheses 1-3 revealed two significant results and one result that was not significant (Table 5).

Table 5

ANOVA Summary Table for Research Questions 1-3/Hypotheses 1-3

Source	*df*	*F*	*p*
Athletic Participation	1	30.80***	.000
Economically Disadvantaged	1	10.04**	.002
Athletic Participation * Economically Disadvantaged	1	0.02	.898
Error	2884	(.556)	
Total	2887		

Note. Value in parentheses represent mean square error. ***$p < .001$.**$p < .01$. Dependent variable = Cumulative GPA.

Research Question One/Hypothesis One

To what extent is there a difference in academic performance as defined by cumulative GPA relative to the participation or nonparticipation of African American males in high school athletics? There was a main effect for athletic participation, $F(1, 2884) = 30.80$, $p<0.001$. African American males who participated in athletics ($M = 2.38$,

SD = 0.70) had significantly higher cumulative GPAs than did AAMs who did not participate in athletics (*M* = 2.12, *SD* = 0.77).

H_{01} stated that there is no significant difference in academic performance as defined by cumulative GPA relative to the participation or nonparticipation of African American males in high school athletics. There was a significant difference in academic performance as defined by cumulative GPA relative to the participation or nonparticipation of African American males in high school athletics, $F(1, 2884) = 30.80$, $p<0.001$. African American males who participated in athletics (*M* = 2.38, *SD* = 0.70) had significantly higher cumulative GPAs than did African American males who did not participate in athletics (*M* = 2.12, *SD* = 0.77). Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Research Question Two/Hypothesis Two

To what extent is there a difference in academic performance as defined by cumulative GPA relative to the SES of African American males? There was a main effect for SES, $F(1, 2884) = 10.04$, $p = 0.002$. Specifically, African American males who were economically disadvantaged (*M* = 2.20, *SD* = 0.75) had significantly lower cumulative GPAs than did African American males who were not economically disadvantaged (*M* = 2.37, *SD* = 0.81).

H_{02} stated that there is no significant difference in academic performance as defined by cumulative GPA relative to the SES of African American males. There was a significant difference in academic performance as defined by cumulative GPA relative to the SES of African American males, $F(1, 2884) = 10.04$, $p=0.002$. Specifically, African American males who were economically disadvantaged (*M* = 2.20, *SD* = 0.75) had

significantly lower cumulative GPAs than did AAMs who were not economically disadvantaged (M = 2.37, SD = 0.81). Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Research Question Three/Hypothesis Three

To what extent is there an interaction between the SES and participation or nonparticipation of African American males in high school athletics on academic performance as defined by cumulative GPA? There was no significant interaction between SES and athletic participation as defined by cumulative GPA, $F(1, 2884) = 0.02$, $P = 0.898$.

H_{03} stated that there is no significant interaction between the SES and participation or nonparticipation of African American males in high school athletics on academic performance as defined by cumulative GPA. There was no significant interaction between the SES and participation or nonparticipation of African American males in high school athletics on academic performance as defined by cumulative GPA, $F(1, 2884) = 0.02$, $p = 0.898$. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected (Figure 4).

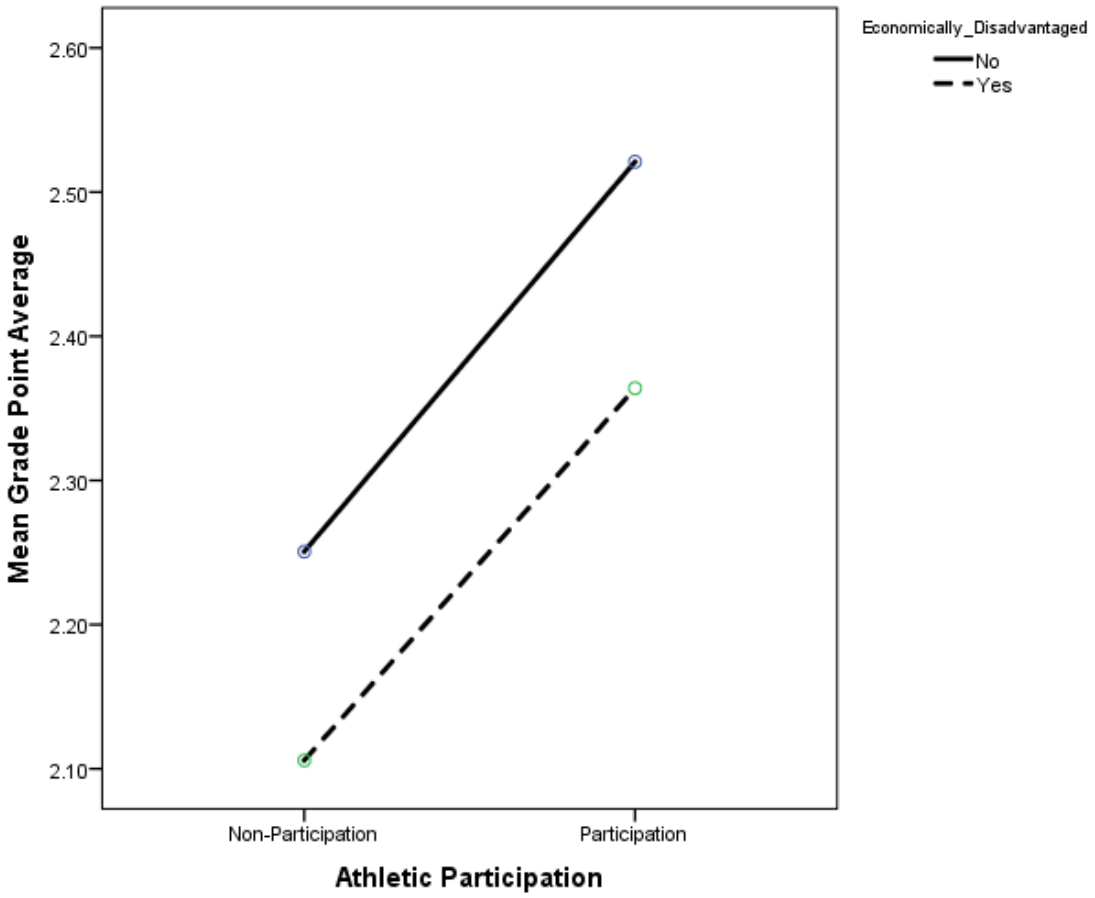

Figure 4. Athletic Participation and SES by Grade Point Average

Research Questions 4-6/Hypotheses 4-6

Research questions 4-6/hypotheses 4-6 were investigated simultaneously with a two-way ANOVA. The independent variables were athletic participation status with two levels (participation, nonparticipation) and SES with two levels (yes, no) as defined by whether or not students are on free or reduced lunch. The dependent variable was composite ACT score. The two main effects were tested in hypotheses 4 and 5. The interaction was tested in hypothesis 6. Group means are presented in Table 6.

Table 6

Group Means for Research Questions 4-6/Hypotheses 4-6

Athletic Participation	Economically Disadvantaged	*M*	*SD*	*N*
Nonparticipation	No	18.64	4.84	126
	Yes	15.24	3.27	1102
	Total	15.59	3.61	1228
Participation	No	18.19	4.13	114
	Yes	15.32	3.05	841
	Total	15.67	3.32	955
Total	No	18.43	4.51	240
	Yes	15.27	3.17	1943
	Total	15.62	3.49	2183

Note. Dependent variable = ACT Composite Score

The summary of research questions 4-6/hypotheses 4-6 revealed one significant result and two results that were not significant (Table 7).

Table 7

ANOVA Summary Table for Research Questions 4-6/Hypotheses 4-6

Source	*df*	*F*	*p*
Athletic Participation	1	.63	.428
Economically Disadvantaged	1	186.77***	.000
Athletic Participation * Economically Disadvantaged	1	1.36	.244
Error	2179	(11.21)	
Total	2182		

Note. Value in parentheses represent mean square error. ***$p<0.001$; Dependent variable = ACT Composite Score.

Research Question 4/Hypothesis 4

To what extent is there a difference in academic performance as defined by composite ACT score relative to the participation or nonparticipation of African American males in high school athletics? There was no main effect for athletic participation, $F(1, 2179) = 0.63$, $p = 0.428$. African American males who participated in

athletics (M = 15.67, SD = 3.32) did not perform significantly different on the ACT than did AAMs who did not participate in athletics (M = 15.59, SD = 3.61).

H_{04} stated that there is no significant difference in academic performance as defined by composite ACT score relative to the participation or nonparticipation of African American males in high school athletics. There was no significant difference in academic performance as defined by composite ACT score relative to the participation or nonparticipation of African American males in high school athletics, $F(1, 2179) = 0.63$, $P = 0.428$. AAMs who participated in athletics (M = 15.67, SD = 3.32) did not perform significantly differently on the ACT than did AAMs who did not participate in athletics (M = 15.59, SD = 3.61). Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Research Question 5/Hypothesis 5

To what extent is there a difference in academic performance as defined by composite ACT score relative to the SES of African American males? There was a main effect for SES, $F(1, 2179) = 186.77$, $p<0.001$. Specifically, AAMs who were economically disadvantaged (M = 15.27, SD = 3.17) had significantly lower composite ACT scores than did AAMs who were not economically disadvantaged (M = 18.43, SD = 4.51).

H_{05} stated that there is no significant difference in academic performance as defined by composite ACT score relative to the SES of African American males. There was a significant difference in academic performance as defined by composite ACT score relative to the SES of African American males, $F(1, 2179) = 186.77$, $p<0.001$. AAMs who were economically disadvantaged (M = 15.27, SD = 3.17) had significantly lower

composite ACT scores than did AAMs who were not economically disadvantaged (M = 18.43, SD = 4.51). Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Research Question 6/Hypothesis 6

To what extent is there an interaction between the SES and participation or nonparticipation of African American males in high school athletics on academic performance as defined by composite ACT score? There was no significant interaction between SES and athletic participation as defined by composite ACT score, $F(1, 2179) = 1.36$, $p = 0.244$.

H_{06} stated that there is no significant interaction between the SES and participation or nonparticipation of African American males in high school athletics on academic performance as defined by composite ACT score. There was no significant interaction between SES and athletic participation as defined by composite ACT score, $F(1, 2179) = 1.36$, $p = 0.244$. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected (Figure 5).

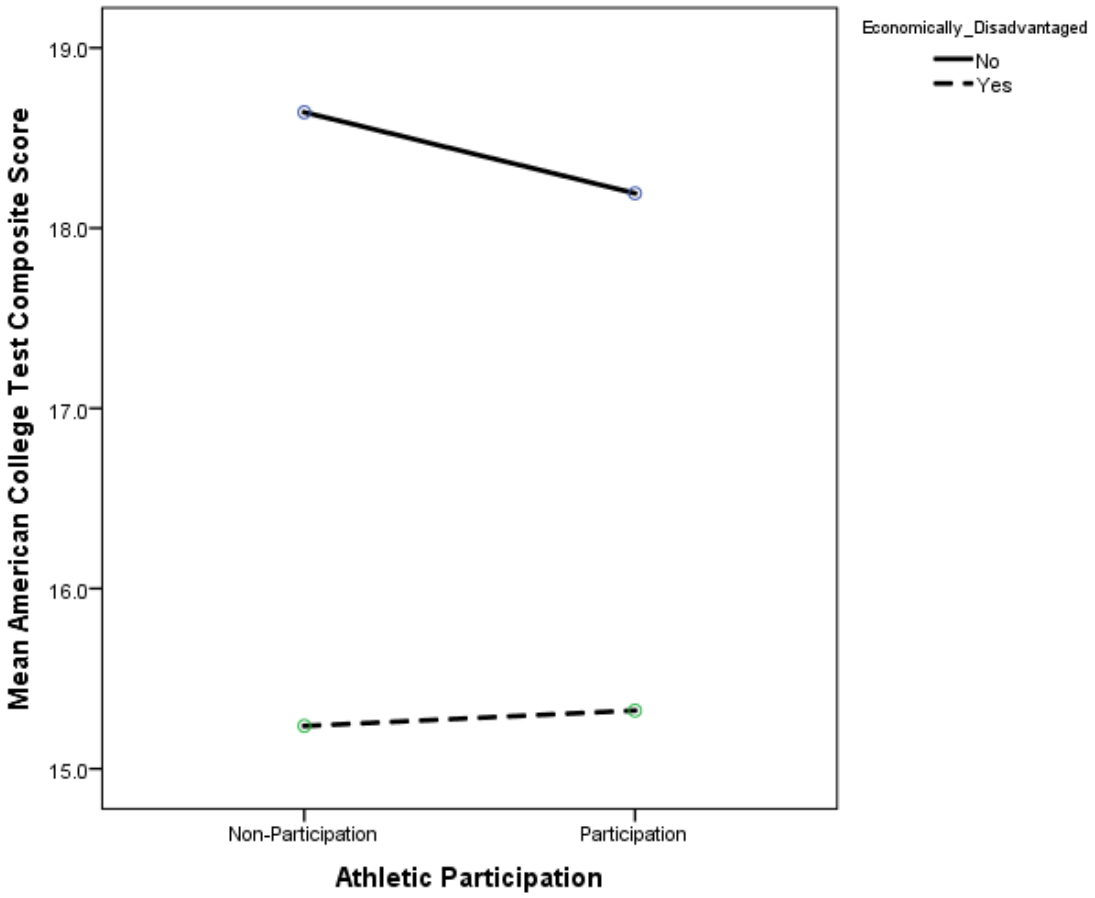

Figure 5. Athletic Participation and SES by ACT Score

Research Question 7/Hypothesis 7

Research question 7/hypothesis 7 was investigated with a 2 X 2 chi-square test. The independent variable was athletic participation with two levels (participation, nonparticipation). The dependent variable was high school completion with two levels (yes, no). High school completion was a nominal variable in the data set measured by whether students withdrew from high school or obtained certificates of attendance, regular diplomas, or special education diplomas. From these categories, two categories were created for high school completion (yes, no). The result was statistically significant.

Research Question 7

To what extent is there a difference in the high school completion rates of African American males relative to their participation or nonparticipation in high school athletics? There was a significant difference in the high school completion rates of African American males relative to their participation or nonparticipation in high school athletics, $X^2(1, N = 2890) = 35.54$, $p<0.001$. For example, 91.9% ($n = 1649$) of AAMs who did not participate in athletics completed high school compared to 97.4% ($n = 1067$) of the AAMs who participated in athletics and graduated (Table 8).

Table 8

*Athletic Participation * High School Completion Cross-tabulation*

			High School Completion		Total
			No	Yes	
Athletic Participation	Nonparticipation	Count	145	1649	1794
		Expected Count	108.0	1686.0	1794.0
		% within Athletic Participation	8.1%	91.9%	100.0%
		% of Total	5.0%	57.1%	62.1%
	Participation	Count	29	1067	1096
		Expected Count	66.0	1030.0	1096.0
		% within Athletic Participation	2.6%	97.4%	100.0%
		% of Total	1.0%	36.9%	37.9%
Total		Count	174	2716	2890
		Expected Count	174.0	2716.0	2890.0
		% within Athletic Participation	6.0%	94.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	6.0%	94.0%	100.0%

Conversely, 8.1% (*n* = 145) of AAMs who did not participate in athletics did not complete high school compared to 2.6% (*n* = 29) of AAMs who participated in athletics but did not complete high school (Figure 6).

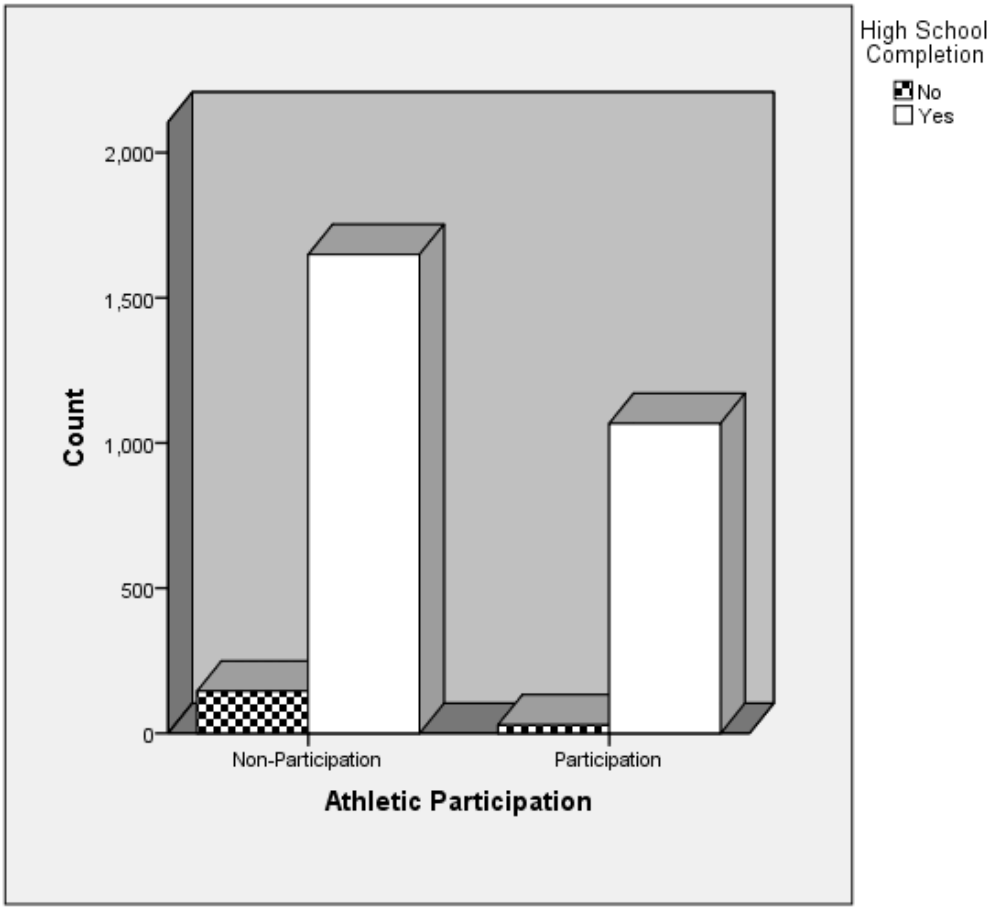

Figure 6. Athletic Participation and High School Completion

Table 9 provides a summary of all hypotheses tested and the outcomes.

Table 9

Hypothesis	Statistical Test	*P*	Outcome
H_1: There is a significant difference in academic performance as defined by cumulative GPA relative to the participation or nonparticipation of African American males in high school athletics.	two-way ANOVA	<0.001	Supported
H_2: There is a significant difference in academic performance as defined by cumulative GPA relative to the SES of African American males.	two-way ANOVA	0.002	Supported
H_3: There is a significant interaction between the SES and participation or nonparticipation of African American males in high school athletics on academic performance as defined by cumulative GPA.	two-way ANOVA	0.898	Not Supported
H_4: There is a significant difference in academic performance as defined by composite ACT score relative to the participation or nonparticipation of African American males in high school athletics.	two-way ANOVA	0.428	Not Supported
H_5: There is a significant difference in academic performance as defined by composite ACT score relative to the SES of African American males.	two-way ANOVA	<0.001	Supported
H_6: There is a significant interaction between the SES and participation or nonparticipation of African American males in high school athletics on academic performance as defined by composite ACT score.	two-way ANOVA	0.244	Not Supported
H_7: There is a significant difference in the high school completion rates of African American males relative to their participation or nonparticipation in high school athletics.	Chi-Square	<0.001	Supported

Summary

Seven research questions and related hypotheses were tested. The observed outcomes revealed that four were significant and three were not significant. Among the significant results, African American males who participated in athletics had significantly higher cumulative GPAs than did African American males who did not participate in athletics. African American males who were economically disadvantaged had significantly lower cumulative GPAs than African American males who were not economically disadvantaged. African American males who were economically disadvantaged had significantly lower composite ACT scores than did African American males who were not economically disadvantaged. There was a significant difference in the high school completion rates of African American males relative to their participation or nonparticipation in high school athletics. For instance, 91.9% of AAMs who did not participate in athletics completed high school compared to 97.4% of the AAMs who participated in athletics and completed high school.

There were three nonsignificant outcomes. There was no significant interaction between SES and athletic participation relative to cumulative GPA. African American males who participated in athletics did not perform significantly different on the ACT than did African American males who did not participate in athletics. There was no significant interaction between SES and athletic participation relative to composite ACT score. Implications of these results will be discussed in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5

Summary, Implications, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

This chapter briefly reviews the purpose of the study and research methodology used for this study. The researcher discusses the summary of findings and gives interpretations of these findings based on the analyses performed. Conclusions are conveyed within the framework of existing research and recommendations for possible research are expressed.

The struggle for African American males to succeed in this country is one of concern for educators and leaders across the United States. At alarming rates, this population of students are failing to progress through the educational system and reach graduation. With approximately 33% of African American males dropping out of high school each year, there is a definite sense of urgency among those in the field of education around finding meaningful solutions to promote academic achievement for this subgroup (Schott Foundation, 2012). In all academic areas, White males outperform African American males in all subject areas and graduate at a rate that is about 21% higher, thus creating a long-standing achievement gap between these two groups of students (Schott Foundation, 2012). Socioeconomic status, disengagement, exclusionary consequences, and stereotyping are threats that have all been examined as contributors to the growing achievement gap that is evident in all parts of the country, making the elimination of these factors appear to be a reasonable solution to closing the achievement gap.

Historically, African American males have been recognized as having superior athletic abilities and being able to outperform their peers of other races in sports. For many African American male students, participation is athletics is a means of gaining acceptance in the school setting and feeling a sense of belonging (Stout & Christenson, 2009). Student engagement has been shown in previous research to have a positive impact on student outcomes, since it strengthens the high school experience (National Center for Education Statistics, 2002). The academic achievement of high school students has a direct effect on access to postsecondary education and career readiness (Agnew, 2004).

The effects of disengagement for African American males place them at an even higher risk of dropping out of high school than their peers of other races (Marsh, 1993). For more than two decades, researchers have examined factors that improve academic outcomes for African American male students. While there are some studies that show the existence of a positive relationship between athletic participation and academic achievement, others find that other factors may impact the academic outcomes for these students and that the relationship may even be negative for some African American male students (Hoberman, 1997). As a result of a deeper understanding of the factors that influence the academic achievement of this subgroup is critical to the field of education at both the secondary and postsecondary levels. This research was conducted to add to the body of literature that focuses on the relationship between athletic participation in high school and academic achievement of African American males. Results from this study may also create a deeper understanding of factors that influence the academic outcomes for this group of students, thus guiding decisions on budgets for athletic programs to

increase opportunities for participation and professional development for coaches to effectively manage the challenges that come along with the training and development of student athletes. This chapter will present the findings of the study, the relationship to the literature, and the assumptions of the researcher.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between participation and nonparticipation in high school athletics and the academic achievement of African American males. The results of this research may support the efforts of school districts in the work to improve the graduation rate, raise achievement levels, and provide African American males students with equity of access to postsecondary education. Through a secondary analysis of existing data, the researcher analyzed data relative to participation and nonparticipation in athletics, socioeconomic status (SES), student GPA, and high school completion types to identify the relationships between these variables.

Review of Methodology

The researcher obtained permission to conduct the study from the University of Memphis Institutional Review Board as a secondary analysis of existing data. The data used in the study were provided by an urban school district, along with consent to examine the data as part of this study. The population for this study consisted of 2,890 African American male high school students in an urban school district. Of this group, 37.9% participated in some type of athletic activity while attending high school.

A quantitative research design was used to compare the ACT scores, GPAs, high school completion of students who participated in high school athletics with those students who did not participate in high school athletics. The district provided data in a

Microsoft Excel Spreadsheet that included students who were in the fourth year of high school. For the purpose of this study, only African American male student data were used in the analyses.

This study used inferential statistics (two-way ANOVA), as it sought to examine if participation or nonparticipation in high school athletics had an impact on the academic achievement of African American males. The study focused on students who were enrolled in 33 high schools in Tennessee. Students who met the criteria for inclusion in the study were African American males who should have completed high school in the spring of 2012. A total of 1,096 students participated in athletics, while 1,794 did not participate. Data that were provided allowed the researcher to compare the academic achievement of the students who did participate in athletics to those who did not participate in any type of athletic program in high school.

Academic achievement was measured by the following variables:

1. Cumulative GPA
2. ACT Composite Score
3. High School Completion

Discussion of the Findings

This study revealed evidence related to the relationship between participation and nonparticipation in athletics and academic achievement of African American male students in urban high school settings. The findings of this study are supported to a great extent by the previous literature that was reviewed in Chapter 2. The socioeconomic status (SES) of children in schools does have a significant impact on the educational outcomes for these children (McLoughlin & Noltemeyer, 2010). In this study, the

academic achievement of the students was compared to the independent variables of participation in athletics, nonparticipation in athletics, and SES. The researcher investigated the relationship between the SES of the students and academic achievement based on the GPA, ACT, and high school completion. Furthermore, the researcher investigated the significance of the relationship between the SES of the students and academic achievement. Corneliben and Pfeifer (2007) found that participating in athletics has a great impact on the character of student through the enhancement of critical life skills such as, self-discipline, confidence, persistence, self-motivation, and responsibility. The classroom experiences for African American males often do not foster the development of life skills for this particular group of students (Corneliben & Pfeifer, 2007). The development of these life skills is necessary for academic success even beyond high school (Braddock, 1981).

Research Questions

1. To what extent is there a difference in academic performance as defined by cumulative GPA relative to the participation or nonparticipation of African American males in high school athletics?
2. To what extent is there a difference in academic performance as defined by cumulative GPA relative to the SES of African American males?
3. To what extent is there an interaction between the SES and participation or nonparticipation of African American males in high school athletics on academic performance as defined by cumulative GPA?

4. To what extent is there a difference in academic performance as defined by composite ACT score relative to the participation or nonparticipation of African American males in high school athletics?
5. To what extent is there a difference in academic performance as defined by composite ACT score relative to the SES of African American males?
6. To what extent is there an interaction between the SES and participation or nonparticipation of African American males in high school athletics on academic performance as defined by composite ACT score?
7. To what extent is there a difference in the high school completion rates of African American males relative to their participation or nonparticipation in high school athletics?

In order to address research questions 1-3, hypotheses 1-3 were tested using a two-way ANOVA to compare the independent variables of athletic participation with two levels (participation, nonparticipation in athletics) and two levels of SES (yes, no) as delineated by whether or not the students were eligible to receive free or reduced lunch.

The results of this study indicated that there was a significant difference in the GPAs of the African American males who participated in athletics and those who did not participate in athletics. There was a main effect for athletic participation, $F(1, 2884) = 30.80$, $p<0.001$. Those African American males who participated in athletics had significantly higher GPAs than did their counterparts who did not participate in athletics. The group mean for the Cumulative GPA of African American males who participated in athletics was 2.38 and the group mean for the Cumulative GPA was 2.12 for those who did not participate in athletics, showing that the students who participated in athletics

earned higher grades in high school subjects. These findings are consistent with the research of Rasmussen (2000), who found that participation in high school athletics does have a positive impact on the improvement of students' grades, academic performance, and opportunities beyond high school.

In hypothesis 2, the Cumulative GPAs of the African American males who were economically disadvantaged was compared to the Cumulative GPAs of those African American males who were not economically disadvantaged. The results showed that African American males who were economically disadvantaged (M = 2.20, SD = 0.75) earned significantly lower GPAs than did their peers who were not economically disadvantaged (M = 2.37, SD = 0.81). As noted in the Schott Report (2009), African American students living in poverty consistently perform lower than their peers across all academic areas.

Research hypothesis 3 was examined to determine if there was a significant interaction between SES and athletic participation as defined by cumulative GPA. There was no significant interaction between SES and athletic participation as defined by cumulative GPA, $F(1, 2884) = 0.02$, $p = 0.898$. The African American males who did not participate in athletics acquired a mean GPA that was similar to the mean GPA of the African American males who did participate in athletics. This signifies that participation or nonparticipation in athletics did not change the outcomes related to the students' cumulative grades when comparing those who are economically disadvantaged to those who are not economically disadvantaged. These findings shed light on the fact that athletics is only one type of experience that may influence outcomes for students. Gilmore (2014), stated that students should also be recognized for excellence in activities

outside of athletics and for earning good grades. The findings of Gilmore (2014) provide evidence to support that other experiences can also be holders to place students on the right track for high school completion. Given that economic status has been shown to have an impact on the performance of students (McLoughlin & Noltemeyer, 2010), these findings support the need to provide a variety of opportunities for engagement to African American males.

Research questions 4-6 were tested using a two-way ANOVA. The independent variables were athletic participation status with two levels (participation, nonparticipation) and socioeconomic status (SES) with two levels (yes, no) as defined by whether or not students are on free or reduced lunch. The dependent variable was composite ACT score. The two main effects were tested in hypotheses 4 and 5. The interaction was tested in hypothesis 6.

In the examination of hypothesis 4, the composite ACT scores were tested to determine if there was a significant difference in the ACT scores relative to the participation or nonparticipation of African American males in high school athletics. In this case, there was no significant difference in the mean ACT scores of the African American males who participated in athletics ($M = 15.67$, $SD = 3.32$) and those African American males who did not participate in athletics ($M = 15.59$, $SD = 3.61$). The students scored similarly on the ACT test, regardless of athletic participation. Stout and Christenson (2009) found that in order to significantly improve the cognitive and academic engagement of all students, there must be affective engagement that supports and promotes positive learning environments, especially for those facing tough challenges. Engagement in athletics may not be enough to overcome the negative effects

of stereotypes on African American males (Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2008). A common trend among the predominantly black urban schools is low test scores (Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2009).

The test of hypothesis 5 was to compare the composite ACT scores of the African American males who are economically disadvantaged to the composite ACT scores of those African American males who are not economically disadvantaged. The results showed that African American males who are economically disadvantaged earned significantly lower composite ACT scores (M = 15.27, SD = 3.17) than did their peers who are not economically disadvantaged (M = 18.43, SD = 4.51). This finding further highlights the findings of Jensen (2009), who espoused that the economic status of children can put them at a great disadvantage, due to a lack of exposure outside of the community and access to resources that are needed for success in the school setting.

Research hypothesis 6 was examined to determine if there was a significant interaction between SES and athletic participation as defined by composite ACT score. There was no significant interaction between SES and athletic participation as defined by composite ACT scores, $F(1, 2179) = 1.36$, $p = 0.244$. The African American males who did not participate in athletics acquired a mean composite ACT scores that was not significantly different from the mean composite ACT scores of the African American males who did participate in athletics. This indicates that participation or nonparticipation did not change the outcomes related to the students' composite ACT scores when comparing those who are economically disadvantaged to those who are not economically disadvantaged who did and did not participate in athletics. Identifying and implementing successful strategies that consistently promote the academic success of

African American males is a challenge that faces education reformers across this country, (Kafele, 2009), as indicated by this finding.

The seventh research question was examined to determine the extent to which there is a difference in the high school completion rates of African American males relative to their participation or nonparticipation in high school athletics. Hypothesis 7 was investigated using a 2 X 2 chi-square test to examine the high school completion rates of the African American males in the study. There was a significant difference in the high school completion rates of African American males relative to their participation or nonparticipation in high school athletics, $X^2(1, N = 2{,}890) = 35.54$, $p<0.001$. This result is evidenced in the fact that 91.9% (n = 1,649) of African American males who did not participate in athletics completed high school compared to 97.4% (n = 1,067) of the African American males who participated in athletics and graduated. Corneliben and Pfeifer (2007) found that participating in athletics has a great impact on the character of student through the enhancement of critical life skills such as, self-discipline, confidence, persistence, self-motivation, and responsibility. The classroom experiences for African American males often do not foster the development of life skills for this particular group of students (Corneliben & Pfeifer, 2007). The development of these life skills is necessary for academic success even beyond high school (Braddock, 1981).

Implications for Practice

Optimal Implications. When pooled with existing research on the relationship between athletic participation and academic achievement for African American male high school students, this research has implications for educators at both the secondary and postsecondary level who are seeking ways to close the achievement gap and to provide

these students with equal access to a better quality of life through educational experiences. Often, parents and students feel that participation in athletics in high school will provide the best opportunity to learn, even if it means moving or transferring to a school other than the one assigned by the school district (Rumberger & Lim, 2008). According to Hoberman (1997), students who participate in athletics also increase opportunities for scholarships and access to higher education, making students athletes more likely to attend college.

The findings of this study may also be used to promote the benefits of continuing to invest in athletic programs and other extracurricular opportunities for African American males in the school setting. Stout and Christenson (2009), suggested that students who are engaged in the school environment are inclined to earn higher grades and achieve personal goals. With growing deficits in public school budgets, athletics is often one of the areas cut or diminished in order to preserve academic programs. The findings of this study show that athletic participation can be a viable means of engagement for African American male students and moves them toward high school completion (Marsh, 1993).

Additional implications for postsecondary education are related to the ACT score results, which serve as an indicator of college readiness (ACT, 2009). The findings of this study revealed that economically disadvantaged African American males earned lower composite scores on the ACT test, which indicates that these students are less close to college readiness and have a lesser chance of gaining college entrance. Secondary schools should expand pathways that are available to students that allow African American males to explore and achieve postsecondary readiness. Athletics has been the

means of access to college for African American males for many years, but many of these students are ill prepared to successfully earn a college degree. As noted by Hoberman (1997), there are educators who believe that the two work against each other in a competitive manner. The African American males who participated in athletics throughout high school not only earned higher ACT scores but also earned significantly higher GPAs and showed higher completion rates than did their counterparts who did not participate in athletics. As discussed in research conducted by Black (2002), athletics and educational achievement are correlated and can have long-term benefits for the participants.

Divergent Implications. This quantitative research examined the academic achievement of African American male high school students who either did or did not participate in athletics. Conceivably, the results of this study can help school leaders decide where to allocate resources in an effort to produce the most effective outcomes for African American males who otherwise may become disengaged from the school setting. Given the fact that SES significantly impacted the academic achievement outcomes of cumulative GPA, composite ACT score, and high school completion, it is certainly reasonable to focus efforts on reducing the effects of poverty on the learning environment for African American male students. Harris (2006) suggested that the multifaceted web of social relationships that students experience, such as with peers, family, and adults in the community and school, significantly influence the students' academic goals.
Even when African American males are engaged in athletics where they may experience a sense of belonging, there is still a significantly different academic outcome for them when faced with living in poverty. Educators should establish a strategic plan, based on

statistical data and implemented with fidelity, in order to reduce the effects of disengagement and low achievement for African American males (Kafele, 2009).

Children who are living in economically disadvantaged homes are at high risk for low academic achievement and failure to graduate from high school, due to inferior educational resources in both the school and in the home (Jensen, 2009). In order to combat the negative effects of poverty, schools must successfully use a blend of formal and informal approaches to build reliable relationships and strengthen peer socialization and social elevation by distinguishable roles, such as athlete, scholar, actor, or comedian (Harris, 2006). This study confirms the research of Harris (2006) related to the impact of SES on the academic achievement. It is imperative that schools create culturally responsive environments that nurture economically disadvantaged students. When students are being raised in poverty, schools must make intentional efforts to provide professional development for teachers to help them respond appropriately to student needs. One of the greatest difficulties that teachers and school administrators are faced with in education is understanding and addressing the essential needs of disengaged students (Willms, 2003).

Efforts to develop engaging and safe classrooms will yield positive student outcomes academically for economically disadvantaged African American males. Even after participating in athletics, economically disadvantaged students did not perform as well as non-economically disadvantaged students in academic areas. This supports the research of Jensen (2009) and highlights the fact that the effects of poverty must be addressed in schools in order to close the achievement gap and improve graduation rates of African American male students. There is increasing evidence that strong, continual

engagement among diverse learners necessitates the creation of culturally responsive learning environments (Ogbu, 1995).

Recommendations for Future Related Research

The current research study focused on athletic participation and nonparticipation and SES of African American males in urban high school settings within the same community and the academic achievement of these students. The variables used to measure academic achievement were cumulative GPAs, composite ACT scores, and high school completion. This researcher suggests the following for future research with the intent of enhancing the body of work with material that will allow educators to gain deeper insight into impactful strategies that will improve academic outcomes for African American males in high school and beyond:

Recommendations related to SES

- Additional studies relative to experiences that enhance the school environment for economically disadvantaged students in a manner that significantly improves the academic achievement of these students.
- Conduct a quantitative study on the academic achievement of African American males who were identified as at-risk prior to entering 9th grade and participated in athletics in high school.
- More research on the long-term effects of athletic participation and college and career readiness for economically disadvantaged African American males.
- Further research is needed to determine if economically disadvantaged African American males who attend predominantly White schools

outperform economically disadvantaged African American males who attend predominantly Black schools.

Recommendations related to Athletic Participation

- Further research is needed to determine the significance of the training of coaches relative to the social and academic development of student athletes.
- Conduct a quantitative study to determine if there is a significant difference in the academic performance of students based on the type of athletic activity.
- More research on athletics as a way for African American males to access postsecondary education and earn college degrees.
- Further research on outcomes for African American males who receive special education services and participate in athletic activities.
- Conduct a qualitative study with students whose parents move or transferred the students to a different school for an opportunity to participate on a certain athletic team.
- More research is needed to determine if the amount of time that a student participates in an athletic activity impacts academic achievement differently.

Conclusions

In conclusion, this research has offered significant data to identify the relationship between the participation in athletics and the academic achievement of African American males in high school. Participation in athletics proved to have a substantial impact on the

completion of high school for African American males and the grades that these students earned while in high school. The significance of the effect of poverty on academic outcomes for African American males was proven in this study. While we have known that children in poverty have many obstacles to overcome academically, this research shows that intentional efforts must be made by educators to engage these students, even beyond athletic participation. The effects of poverty are so strong that these students achieve at even lower levels than other students of the same race and gender in the same school setting. Consequently, it is conceivable that, if educators investigate culturally responsive classrooms and examine methods that connect students with trained coaches as mentors, athletic participation could have a more meaningful impact on academic achievement.

Investigations such as this will guide the field of education at both the secondary and postsecondary levels in the right direction. This will allow educators to move closer to actually closing the achievement gap and minimizing negative and failing outcomes for African American males in this country. It will also define more clearly how to maximize resources and create long-lasting positive academic outcomes for African American males who continue to suffer from disengagement and failure at rates much higher than those of any other race or gender. This study highlights that participation in athletics and SES influence academic achievement for African American males in high school. Students are motivated by the opportunity to feel a sense of belonging to a group and having a role in the school environment. This involvement in the school environment should be nurtured and given the necessary investment to properly train school staff and coaches, so that student athletes can receive the maximum benefit.

Participating in athletics in high school could be a vital way to improve the academic achievement of African American males.

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Shelby County Schools Application for Research Approval

Office of Planning and Accountability

1. Applicant's Name: Angela L. Hargrave

2. Organization Affiliation (e.g., University): University of Memphis

3. Project Title: An Examination of the Relationship between the Athletic Participation and Academic Performance of African American Males

4. Applicant's Phone Numbers: (901) 754-1982 (901)210-7184

5. Applicant's Email Addresses: lhrgrave@memphis.edu hargraveal@scsk12.org

6. Indicate the schools that will be involved in the study. Either list the schools if there are a few or describe the schools (e.g., all high schools, 10 randomly selected middle schools). Data from 28 high schools that were a part of the legacy Memphis City School district will be used in this research.

7. When do you anticipate that your study will begin, and when will it end (Note that up to 40 working days may be required for the initial review of your proposal, and revisions may be required after the initial review)? This research is anticipated to begin in March of 2014 and conclude in August of 2014.

8. List your research questions. What is the relationship between athletic participation and academic achievement of African American male students in high school? What is the academic performance of African American males who participate in athletics in high school? What is the academic performance of African American What is the relationship between the types of athletic activity and student achievement among African American male students?

9. Describe your sample, answering the following questions. Who will be in your sample? How many people will be in your sample? How will your sample be selected? The sample of the study will be African American male students who entered high school in 2008. The students will be selected based on whether or not they participated in athletic activities or not.

10. Detail your research methodology. Be sure to include the following information:

    What will study participants be required to do? Include an estimate of the amount of time that will be required per participant (e.g., three 45 minute sessions). Describe any measurement instruments that will be used (e.g., surveys) and attach copies to the email with this form. Indicate how data will be collected and how often. Specify when participants will be involved in study activities (e.g., after school). The students will not be asked to participate in a study and will not be identified in any way.

11. Describe your proposed data analyses. Student data that will be analyzed through statistical measures will include the students' type of athletic participation, grades or ACT score (either will be sufficient), and whether or not a diploma was earned.

12. How will the study benefit the students of Shelby County Schools? This study will give some insight into the academic benefit of athletic participation as a means of increasing student opportunities to learn and closing the achievement gap. Given the widening achievement gap between African American males and those of other races, it will be beneficial to investigate the relationship between the academic gains of students who participate in athletics to determine if more students would benefit from these types of programs in schools.

13. What will be required of the district and participating schools? The district is asked to provide existing data from the legacy Memphis City School district's 2012 cohort group of high schools that identify the African American male students who entered high school in 2008 and either did or did not participate in some type of athletic activity.
14. Will your study require the district to provide a data file? If so, specifically describe the variables that will be needed in your data file (e.g., gender, TCAP Achievement Reading/Language Arts scores from spring 2013).Yes, the data file will need to include the students' race, gender, athletic participation, grades or ACT score, and diploma earned.
15. Will any compensation be provided to participants, schools, or the district for participation? No
16. Do you have approval of your study from an Institutional Review Board (attach documentation to the email with this form)? Yes
17. Describe any potential risks for research participants. No risks (Secondary analysis of existing data)
18. How will you maintain the confidentiality of any data collected or used? All information will be strictly confidential and data collected will not be used for any other purposes beyond this study. The names of the schools and the district will not be used in any part of the research.
19. What is your plan for dissemination of results from the study? How do you plan to report results back to the participating schools and the district? Do you plan to report results to audiences other than the schools or the district? The results will be reported back to the district in the form of a final copy of the study. The results will be reported to the University of Memphis in fulfillment of the requirements of the doctoral program.

****Please also complete the online application survey: https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/SCSRESEARCHPROPOSAL**

Office of Planning and Accountability

160 S. Hollywood • Memphis, TN, 38112 • (901) 416-5533 • www.scsk12.org

March 18, 2014

To: Angela Hargrave

Re: Research Proposal

After consideration of your proposal, *An Examination of the Relationship between the Athletic Participation and Academic Performance of African American Males*, we have approved your request to conduct this study in Shelby County Schools. You should use this letter as official notification of approval for your study.

Our understanding is that your proposal is to use existing data, and therefore collection of additional data is not necessary and will not be part of your study. The district will provide a data file, and approval is contingent on you agreeing to use the data file only for the purpose of the study described in the proposal.

We look forward to working with you in the completion of this project.

Please direct any inquiries to me via email at

Sincerely,

From: Jacqueline Reid Tharpe (jreid) on behalf of Institutional Review Board. **Sent** Tuesday, May 14, 2013 7:41 PM. **To** Angela Lynnette Hargrave (lhrgrave) **Cc** Larry McNeal (lmcneal1) **Subject:** IRB Approval2682.

Hello,

The University of Memphis Institutional Review Board, FWA00006815, has reviewed and approved your submission in accordance with all applicable statuses and regulations as well as ethical principles.

PI NAME: Angela Hargrave **CO-PI: PROJECT TITLE:** An Examination of the Relationship between the Athletic Participation and Academic Performance of African American Males **FACULTY ADVISOR NAME (if applicable):** Larry McNeal

IRB ID: #2682 **APPROVAL DATE:** 5/14/2013 **EXPIRATION DATE:** 5/13/2014 **LEVEL OF REVIEW:** Exempt

Please Note: Modifications do not extend the expiration of the original approval

Approval of this project is given with the following obligations:

1. If this IRB approval has an expiration date, an approved renewal must be in effect to continue the project prior to that date. If approval is not obtained, the human consent form(s) and recruiting material(s) are no longer valid and any research activities involving human subjects must stop.

2. When the project is finished or terminated, a completion form must be completed and sent to the board.

3. No change may be made in the approved protocol without prior board approval, whether the approved protocol was reviewed at the Exempt, Exedited or Full Board level.

4. Exempt approval is considered to have no expiration date and no further review is necessary unless the protocol needs modification.

Approval of this project is given with the following special obligations:

Thank you,

Ronnie Priest, PhD

Institutional Review Board Chair

The University of Memphis.

Note: Review outcomes will be communicated to the email address on file. This email should be considered an official communication from the UM IRB. Consent Forms are no longer being stamped as well. Please contact the IRB at IRB@memphis.edu if a letter on IRB letterhead is required.